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Mahamudra - The Emptiness of Mind in Six Flavors

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They say before any important teaching, it's important to clean your bad deeds and collect good karma. We left New York yesterday... most of us got one or two hours of sleep and we didn't get much sleep last night either. We got here around 1 pm or something, so I've been cranky all day. So first I confess, especially to all the people who were trying to give me good advice today, that I didn't pause and do everything I was supposed to do. Good karma to have a teaching, all right?

First of all, it's really nice to see everybody. This was supposed to be a vacation for me, to have one or two days at Pat Well's house quietly by myself. She tricked me. [laughter] [laughs] So you can blame her. Where is she? [laughs] And Maya tricked me too. Where's Maya? She won't raise her hand. Okay. We're going to pick up... I want to thank everybody from LMB who worked very hard. Our group is a special hassle. It's not like one person coming to town. It's like one person with fifty ducks behind him. [laughter] So I thank you for that. And I know we're not very easy to take care of. Thank you for all the... people worked really hard to make sure we were comfortable and things like that. So last year... I don't remember when it was... anyway, we talked about Mahamudra in San Francisco and people liked it and said, would you do a Mahamudra class next winter over Christmas maybe at Pat Well's house? Then it got too complicated, I think. So anyway, it's here.

We're going to try to do two things. One is, explain the theory of Mahamudra, where the word comes from, what the practice means in our tradition especially, and how to do it. And then we're actually going to try and do some Mahamudra meditation. We'll be talking about the tradition as it stands from the First Panchen Lama. The current Panchen Lama is detained by the Chinese Government, we don't know where. He's five years old or something. We don't know where he is, so maybe we can dedicate the virtue of this class to making sure he gets out and that we can see him and have teachings from him when we get to a ripe old age. So I hope that works out.

We'll be exploring that tradition and then we'll be meditating about half the time on different kinds of Mahamudra. We'll be going through six different kinds of emptiness so this class is really billed as "*The Emptiness of the Mind and Six Different Flavors.*" Okay? We've been doing that in New York for the last three months. We've been having a class called trang-nge}. {trang-nge} is the study of emptiness as it was taught by the Buddha through the three turnings of the wheel. The Buddha had three major periods in his life when he taught. During each of those turnings of the wheel, he taught emptiness. And each time he taught it a slightly different way. And then two thousand years later, somebody like Je Tsongkhapa is trying to figure out what the Buddha meant when he taught it three different ways, because two of them have to be wrong. Okay? What was the point? Why would the Buddha teach a kind of emptiness that's not emptiness? Did he make a mistake, but obviously, he doesn't make mistakes, so what is he trying to tell us when he teaches emptiness in at least three different ways, and two of them aren't correct?

So we're going to go through six different ideas of emptiness that the Buddha himself taught during the three turnings of the wheel, and I think what happens there... this was a favorite technique of the First Panchen Lama....he not only examined the correct teaching on something like emptiness, he would give you about five wrong ideas about emptiness and he would examine each one, and make sure you understood each one. The cool thing about that approach is that you will find your present understanding of emptiness in there somewhere. [laughs] [laughter] Okay? It's very effective. There's a beautiful teaching by the First Panchen Lama called {dang-dzin chang dep} which is... you know, the angel and the little devil standing in two little bubbles on two sides of someone's head and arguing? It's that. It's a debate between ignorance and wisdom in one person's mind. Ignorance keeps coming up with new tricks to fool Wisdom and you hear this big argument which is in poetry. The First Panchen Lama was a great poet. So we're going to be doing something like that. What we're going to be doing in the meditation is going through six levels of the explanation of emptiness. And I warn you now, only the last one is real emptiness. The first five were taught by Lord Buddha as being emptiness, but they're not. And later he clarified it by saying, when I had certain audiences, I had to present it that way, because they couldn't get the higher way. The higher way that you're going to hear is the highest way it's accepted by Lord Buddha, Arya Nagarjuna, Je Tsongkhapa, Chandrakirti and by the current Dalai Lama and by all our great Lamas. So it is the real emptiness. It is the one that people who see emptiness directly see. It is the one that's necessary for tantric practice. So number six is going to be the one. You should be here for number six. It should be sometime on Sunday. All right? But we'll be going through about two kinds of emptiness each time, and each time we'll be moving up the ladder of explanation about emptiness. It's the meditation on emptiness which is the real meaning of Mahamudra. So first I'm going to go through that point, what is the meaning of the word Mahamudra, then we'll take a break, and then we'll come back and do some meditations on emptiness. Moving up the ladder, okay? And somewhere in there you should find yours. And then you have to try and push it up a little bit. So here we go.

The word Mahamudra is very sexy. You hear it all the time. I used to get really confused about it. I'd ask my lama, they're teaching all this Mahamudra, you never taught us Mahamudra, we must be missing out on something. Then one day he started teaching it. There's a root text on Mahamudra by the First Panchen Lama. You will get a reading... we couldn't finish it fast enough. It will be handed out... I think there's sixty copies ready, so if someone is planning to come back tomorrow, don't take one. And if you're planning not to come back for later sessions, then please take one as you leave. We have about sixty ready. What's that?

[student: I think it's less than sixty.]

Okay. I like to give a homework. So what I did was compromise. I used to give a full homework, which is what somebody in New York would have to do in two weeks or something like that. What I did was chop it down to three questions. I think it's good that when you get home to write down something, what you remember from the class. My personal experience is that if I don't give any kind of homework, nobody remembers the class before. So you're going to get a homework, you have to fill it out. There'll be somebody at the door tomorrow and the ticket to get in is the homework. I'm not kidding, you have to do it. And it's for your own benefit.

If you go home, and when you get home, if you review it enough to write it down again, you won't forget what I said tonight, and then it will stick with you. And then when you do emptiness meditation, you'll know what you're doing. So don't resist. Just go for it. And you will get better and better at understanding things. If you just listen to lectures and go home, nothing sticks. It's very simple. I cut ten questions down to three, but you have to know those three, all right? Don't leave home without it tomorrow. [laughter] Okay. You don't have to put the Tibetan on your homework, but you can do the homework Tibetan style, if you wish. So if you know any Tibetan, I would expect you to do it in Tibetan also, okay?

Say {chak-gya} [repeat] {chenpo} [repeat]. {chak-gya} [repeat] {chenpo} [repeat]. {chak-gya} means "mudra" or "seal". "Seal" like you put on a letter, like you put wax on a letter and then you put the seal on it, all right? And then {chenpo} means "big" or "great". It stands for "maha". There's a lot of meanings of the word "seal" in Buddhism and there's a lot of meanings of the word "Mahamudra". The {chak-gya} part has a lot of meanings. First of all, it means a seal or stamp that you put on something. Secondly, in tantra, or in Tanka paintings, in imaging, it refers to the accoutrements that the image has, like a sword or book or bell or vajra or whatever they're holding is called a {chak-gya}. On a deeper level, in {dzogrim} practice, second level Tantric practice, {chakgya} has another meaning. There's a {leh kyi chakgya} and a {yeshe kyi chakgya}. And I can't tell you that meaning, but that's a different kind of seal. And in that case, the meaning is something like... in India, when a King sent a message to somebody, they would always put their seal on it. That means this is a real message from the King, like when Genghis Khan was sending messages out to the front line in Austria, it took three years to carry the message out to the front lines. So if it was not stamped with his personal seal, and everybody knew what it looked like, you wouldn't believe it. The message might say, attack Germany and take over Germany. So if it's not stamped properly, you don't do it. So seals were very important in ancient times. They were the only way to confirm that this was really the command of the Emperor or the King. And a King was never separated from his Seal. That was the idea. So the word {chakgya}, in its deepest sense, which I can't describe to you, is that you should never be separated from your {chakgya}. A King is never separated from his seal, and a person should never be separated from his or her {chakgya}. There are two ways... well, maybe I'd better teach {chenpo}. So {chakgya} means "seal" and {chenpo} means "great". Why do we say "great seal"? We're talking now about a different kind of seal. There's a certain seal which marks all things as being empty. A thing is not a thing unless it's empty. You've heard about emptiness, you're going to hear six different flavors of emptiness, which are really how many?

[student: One.]

Yeah, one. Five non-emptinesses and one real one. You're going to learn six different kinds of emptiness. Only one of them is real. It's like a police line where you identify the real criminal, all right? And you should get really good at it. So {chakgya}, a seal means, that if a thing has this quality, it's an object, it's a real dharma, dharma meaning "an existing thing". What marks a thing as a "dharma"? It's emptiness. If a thing has emptiness, it's real. If a thing has emptiness, it's real. And we'll talk more about the meaning of emptiness as we go on. So don't worry about it. "Seal" means "emptiness", okay? The "mudra" in "Mahamudra" means "emptiness".

Because this is a mark that marks something as a real thing, okay? How do you know this pen is real? Because it has its emptiness. So it's emptiness marks it as real. This is the stamp of approval. As what? As an existing thing. So this has a mudra, the mudra has been put on this pen. It's empty, therefore it's real. Okay? Real and illusory. Okay? We'll get to it. [laughs] But it's not real until it's got the stamp of approval from the Emptiness Department. And that's the meaning of "mudra". "Mudra" means "stamp" or "seal" or "mark". It marks this thing.

Why is it called "Big Seal"? Like "Mahamudra"? "Maha" came into the West in languages as "mega", "big", really. It's big because it's a big deal. It's a big deal. Why? Because if you see that emptiness directly, if you see the emptiness of this pen directly, you are out of here! See what I mean? On the day that you see the emptiness of this pen directly, you are on some kind of unstoppable conveyor belt to Nirvana or Buddhahood. We call it {gyun} [repeat] {shukpa} [repeat]. {gyun} [repeat] {shukpa}[repeat]. {gyun shukpa} means "stream enterer", and the reason they say "stream enterer" is because they didn't have conveyor belts at that time, okay? But it's just the idea of a conveyor belt, okay? Once you've seen emptiness directly, you're on your way out. It's just a question of six lifetimes, seven lifetimes, whatever. One lifetime. But it's certain, it's definite, you're on your way out. So for that reason, it's big, this is big news. This mudra, this emptiness, is a big deal, maha. And the "maha" means it's a big deal because if you see it directly, you don't have to go through all this stuff anymore. What stuff? Samsara.

What does "samsara" mean? You know, I get people say, "I'm tired of samsara." I ask, "What's samsara?" They say, "California. I'm moving to New York." [laughter] I say, that's not samsara. They ask, "What's samsara?" Samsara is just that there's a certain nature to the things of your life. And this is really it. The bad things are samsara obviously. We don't have to debate them. Getting sick, losing your job, worrying about money, having credit cards that are way overloaded, this is suffering. We don't have to talk about it. The problem is that all the good things are driven by karma. You did something nice to somebody before. It's ripening now. You're healthy. You have a nice place to live. You have a decent job. You have decent friends. And those are all being driven by karma, what we call "dirty karma", {sak-che kii leh}. The nature of dirty karma is that it wears out. Constantly. By experiencing a pleasure, you are using it up. That's the nature of the karma that is running our lives, meaning... what's the implication? There's not a single good thing in your life that won't get ruined by Mr. Karma. Karma created them and that karma that created them is wearing out. Every time you step in the door of your house, you're using up a certain amount of karma. Every time you get into your car, you're using up a certain amount of car karma. Every time you get a paycheck, you're closer to dying and to not having any money. See what I mean? Every time anything good happens, every time you spend one day with someone you love, you're using up a certain amount of karma. And you're not replacing it very well. So what happens? You lose people. You get laid off. Your house gets sold. Your clothes wear off. If these clothes were created by pure karma, they wouldn't get old. Because they're created by dirty karma, they wear out. So nothing you do is created that way, and everything you have... forget the bad stuff—what I'm saying is samsara is the good stuff that's wearing out. Every moment... the very experience of a nice thing means you're spending karmic credit card money and it's a debit card. You enter with a certain amount of debit stuff on the card, and then, every time you experience something nice, you're actually using it up.

I had a friend who took this to an extreme. You know, in the East Village, to find a parking space is like unbelievable. So he has this theory. He'll drive around for an hour looking for a parking space. Then, when he sees one, he has a crisis. Because he says, if I take it, I'm going to wear out all that karma. [laughs] [laughter] So he drives down the street sometimes, looking for a different one, know what I mean? That's not correct. Okay? That's not the way it works. But he's basically got the right idea, that the problem with samsara is that the bad things are bad, and the good things, although they're.... by the way, nobody can debate that they're not nice. That's a dharma rumor. Is ice-cream nice? Of course it's nice. Is it nice to have a wife or husband or a friend? Of course it's nice. Is it nice to own a house? Of course, a house is nice. Is it nice to go to the beach and surf? Of course, it's nice. Is it nice to listen to good music or see a good movie? Of course it's nice, you can't say it's not nice. The only thing wrong with it is that to get it, you have to use up your karma, and it wears out and the movies ends, or the music ends, and eventually, on one day, all the left-over karma wears out at once. It's very weird. Like you're moving along at a certain rate, and then suddenly the debit card runs out and suddenly you're dead. Okay? That's the only thing you have to look forward to. [laughter] If you learn how to collect good karma, clean good karma, pure good karma, then you're stuck, then you're at the mercy of your old karma, and all you have to look forward to, according to this theory, is that you will lose whatever you have. And you don't want to do that. You want to figure out how to create pure good karma and then... what do you call it? What's the word?

[student: Recycle.]

[student: Perpetuate it.]

Perpetuate it, you want to learn to perpetuate it. Buddhas are perpetuating good karma. They've learnt a way to put in a certain amount of energy and get more good karma out of it than what they use up. It's like fusion or something like that? Where you put in a teaspoon of water and you have enough energy to run a city or something like that? Less in, more out, rather than more in and less out, okay? And the idea is to create some kind of reaction that perpetuates itself. And that's called a Buddha Paradise. How do you do that? You have to perceive Mahamudra. You have to be able to see emptiness directly, and there are different tricks for perceiving emptiness, okay?

So how many types of Mahamudra practice are there? Which one are we going to do? Say {ngak luk} [repeat] {ngak luk}. {ngak} means "tantra". So {ngak} means "secret mantra", "tantra". And {luk} means "system." So there's a tantric system of doing Mahamudra. There's a secret method of doing Mahamudra. Traditionally, that should be passed down from your tantric lama privately to you, okay? When you're ready and when you have a close enough relationship with that lama, then they would pass it on to you privately. And to do the {ngak luk} properly, you have to do {do luk} first. So here's {do luk}. Say {do luk} [repeat] {do luk} [repeat]. {do} means "sutra". "Sutra" has a lot of different meanings. In this case "sutra" means a Buddhist teaching which is not secret, we can call them open teachings. So {ngak luk} is the secret system of teaching Mahamudra, and {do luk} is the open system of teaching Mahamudra. So there are two kinds of Mahamudra. It's important to know this, and later we'll talk about more about them. One of them leads into the other. You need to do {do luk} first, and then you can do {ngak luk}.

Okay? So you have to become a master of the open way of doing Mahamudra and then that will lead you into being able to do the secret way.

The {do luk} depends greatly on an intellectual understanding of Mahamudra. Like studying it, hearing about it, getting it in a classroom situation, thinking about it at home, learning six different kinds of emptiness, learning why five of them are not emptiness, and getting that very firm in your mind and getting pretty good at it. And then you move on to the personal practice of it. You meditate on it a long time. You get good at it, you get very good at it. And only then is your mind ready to go to {ngak luk}, to go up to the tantric method of doing it. Even within tantra, those of you who are doing Vajrayogini sadhana for example, in the {tad chu?}, at the very end, it says {mud a gen ye ke?}, means two ways to perceive emptiness. And there are two different methods within tantra of perceiving emptiness. One is called direct, and one is the... you can say one is like direct and one is roundabout, it's not indirect. It's not direct, indirect. It's direct and some kind of method where you undertake one kind of practice and that creates another result, and then that creates certain results within your mind. So even within tantra, there are two ways of teaching Mahamudra. One that's called "direct", which relies greatly on a lama explaining the emptiness of some object, and then the indirect method or the... I don't know how to say it... where you have to go through certain steps that trigger it, that trigger the direct perception of emptiness, and that's called the indirect method. You do this, and then this happens, that creates that, that triggers that....

[student: [unclear]]

[laughter]

I don't know how to say it. It's like you purposely do something over here that makes you see emptiness over there. By the way, in the tantric scriptures, it's the difference between sitting and explaining to somebody what the ocean looks like. In Tibet they knew about the ocean, but they were a thousand miles from the nearest ocean. So if you want to explain the ocean, one way is to stand there and say, well, you know it's this big piece of water, it's got all this salt in it, it's not like the water in the rivers here in Lhasa. And you go through this long explanation and hope they can perceive the ocean. See what I mean? In an indirect way. They don't see the real ocean, but they understand "ocean," okay? Then the second way, in the tantric scriptures it's stated, in the Vajrayogini commentaries, they say okay, go down to Shigatse, take the road down to Nepal, take a left, when you hit this big piece of water don't cross it, keep following it down to Calcutta, then work your way down to Bangladesh, then you're going to come across this big thing, and that's the ocean. [laughs] So that's called the indirect method. I don't know how to... see, you trigger something in Lhasa, you give them certain instructions, and then later they perceive something, down in the Bay of Bengal, or I don't know what it is, they see the ocean like that.

So there's two ways of seeing emptiness. First you have to do the sutra system. When you graduate from that, or when you get sophisticated enough in that... and sophisticated means... I can count off the six kinds of emptiness like that and I know why the first five are wrong and I'm not doing them. See what I mean? And by the way, this class is not just some spacey meditation that you're going to do. This is going to have repercussions in your personal life. If you get what Mahamudra means, then on Monday you're going to be doing something different at work.

I'm not just teaching some kind of spaced out meditation about emptiness or something like that. Emptiness has profound repercussions on your personal life, at work, in your family, with your friends. It's supposed to have. So I'm going to teach Mahamudra in a sense that you should be able to practice it at work, okay. And that requires an understanding of all the different kinds of emptiness. You won't get the repercussions until Sunday. That's a trick to make you stay tuned in. We're going to tie it down to your personal life. It has very profound repercussions on what you do with your life and how you go through the day, if you really understand Mahamudra. So you can study Mahamudra in a sutra way, understand it intellectually, be able to say, oh, emptiness number four, emptiness number five. You go up to somebody on the street in Santa Cruz and ask them: Do you understand emptiness? She says: "Yeah." And you say: "What is it?" And she says, "It means everything changes." And you say, "Oh that's emptiness number one. Boy, you've got a long way to go."

[laughs] [laughter]

You know what I mean? And you'll be able to know exactly where your own viewpoint of emptiness is. Don't forget that the meaning of this "view", we're going to get on to the meaning of the word "view"... your view of emptiness is also your view of reality. And how do you act during the day is based on that. We're going to talk about that. After you get good at that, {do luk}, then you move up to the tantric systems and much faster ways of seeing emptiness directly.

{do luk} is great, it's wonderful, but it can take 75 countless eons. Countless is a code word in Buddhism for $10 \times 60^{\text{th}}$ power, so that's a long time. You want to get pretty good at it in the sutra system, and then as quickly as possible, you want to graduate up to the tantric system and try to use it that way. But you have to go through one to get to the other and you're actually going to see one of the main qualities of the sutra system is that... it's called {minje kyepar chen}... it prepares your mind to do the tantric system. You can't jump to tantra and try to do it without emptiness. If you try to do tantra without emptiness, at the best, nothing will happen. At the worst, you'll collect a lot of bad deeds. So you have to understand emptiness first. And that's the goal of this meditation and this weekend, okay? So we'll start out with {do luk}. Interesting thing about {do luk}... there's a great lama in the Vajrayogini lineage called Mudradamabhadra. A previous life of Pabongka Rinpoche. To those of you who know, Pabongka Rinpoche is not his real name. He was really Changke Rinpoche. But Changke Rinpoche was a Chinese lama who had a lot to do with the Emperor of China. Then, when Pabongka Rinpoche was born, there was a lot of friction with China. So the lamas who recognized him said we'd better not call him Changke Rinpoche. We'll call him Pabongka Rinpoche because the Pabongka Rinpoche had just passed away. So they said, let's call him Pabongka Rinpoche and then he'll be safe. He's really Changke, who has a deep connection with Mudradamabhadra.

Now Mudradamabhadra is in the 1700s and we have a very beautiful book, which is unusual. We have a whole volume, it's a couple of hundred pages of tough questions that his students threw at him. Like he would sit down and say: open for questions and answers. And his students would ask him tough questions. So it's a very beautiful book to go through to find out details about stuff that you don't understand. So one of the students came up with this thing. He said: "What is the practice of Mahamudra?"

And he said, you want me to tell you the tantric way or the sutra way? In this case sutra means open. So the student says, tell me the sutra way, tell me what Mahamudra is. So Mudradamabhadra says, I'll ask you a question. Forget Mahamudra the way it was taught in Tibet up to now. There were some systems of Mahamudra which... how can I say this? Certain things presented as Mahamudra that maybe weren't the highest presentation of Mahamudra. Maybe they're useful for students to help them at a certain point, but they're not the highest presentation of Mahamudra. Mudradamabhadra says, forget those, we're not talking about those. He says the difference between those presentations in Tibet up to our time, and the presentation of Je Tsongkhapa of Mahamudra is obvious. We're not talking about that. But he said that within Je Tsongkhapa's system, Je Tsongkhapa's presentation of Mahamudra, you know, there's a thing called {ta tri}. By the way, I took this whole discussion and translated it this afternoon and stuck it in your reading and that's why you didn't get a reading, because it was late. Okay. But it's just so cool, so interesting. So somebody asked this lama, Mutradamabhadra, what's Mahamudra mean? And he said, are you asking me the sutra way or the tantra way? And he said, the sutra way. And he says, I'll ask you a question. We've got this thing called {ta tri}. Say {ta} [repeat] {tri} [repeat]. {ta} means "worldview" and we're going to talk about it, the way you view your world. {tri} means "instruction", teaching. So {ta tri} is a special form of teaching where you sit down and you teach somebody about emptiness, which is what we're doing, this weekend we're having a {ta tri}.

So Lama Mudradamabhadra says, I'll ask you a question. And the student is called the Nomohan Rinpoche, he was a High Lama already. Nomohan is a big shot, that's a Mongolian title like "Dalai". So this is a very important student asking the question. And Mutradamabhadra says, I'll ask you a question: "What's the difference between a teaching on Emptiness and Mahamudra? What's the difference?" What does Mahamudra mean by the way? Big emptiness, right? Big seal, meaning big emptiness. Meaning, big, because it gets you out of this problem of dying and stuff like that. So he says, you tell me the difference between a teaching on emptiness and a teaching on Mahamudra. Because if you can't tell me the difference, then why should we have Mahamudra? Why don't we just keep to our old {ta tri's}, because we have tons of {ta tri's} around, we have tons of teachings on emptiness. So why do we have to go into Mahamudra? What's the whole point? And you'll see it in the reading.. what do you guys think? Knowing now what Mahamudra means, which is basically a method for the direct perception of emptiness, then is there any difference between the last part of the Lam Rim Chenmo, which teaches emptiness, or a Mahamudra teaching? Are we just going to go through the six kinds of emptinesses in here this weekend? Is that all we're going to do? What's the difference?

[student: An inferential understanding.]

He says inferential understanding. You mean logically or something like that? Like {ta tri} is logical and Mahamudra is not?

[student: Mahamudra is the direct experience of emptiness and inferential meaning intellectual experience.]

So intellectual as opposed to direct? No. They're both intellectual. They're both intellectual. They both start "intellectual" and they both are supposed to lead to "direct".

By the way, the difference between {jor lam} and {tong lam}, difference between second path, which is preparation, where you're doing intellectual study of emptiness, and then {tong lam}, which is the direct perception of emptiness. So of course you're trying to go... whether you're doing tantra or sutra, you still have to go through those five paths.

[student: To do Mahamudra, do you have to achieve some level of calm abiding?]

She says, to do Mahamudra, do you have to have shamatha first, to do it. No, I mean if you never did tantra, if you never did Mahamudra, even in the sutra system, you would still perceive emptiness directly, you could still do it. To do that, you still have to reach Shamatha, you still have to reach perfect concentration.

[student: [unclear]]

On the what?

[student: The nature of mind.]

That's a good answer. He said directly on the nature of mind. Is Mahamudra directly related to the nature of mind? By the way, that's a better answer than Nomohan Rinpoche gave. [laughs] [laughter] Nomohan Rinpoche said, I think the difference is that in Mahamudra you perceive the clear light combination of bliss and voidness. And Mutradamabhadra says... it's a cool conversation... it's very rare in carved books that are a couple of hundred years old to hear them kind of taunting each other. And Mudradamabhadra says, well, so I guess clear light of bliss and wisdom are not tantra? And Nomohan says, oh I'm sorry, we're not talking tantra, right. And Mutradamabhadra says, of course we're not talking tantra, we're talking sutra right now. Bad answer! [laughter]

He's giving him a hard time. That's an interesting answer, and it's wrong. So then Mutradamabhadra says, okay, since you couldn't figure it out, I'll tell you. [laughter] You know, it has to do with the object that you're meditating on. And in Mahamudra, the difference is that you're concentrating on the emptiness of the mind. Like you could pick a pen, you could pick your ear, you could pick your nose, you could pick New York city, [laughter] but that's a different thing. The point is that when you use your mind as the object of an emptiness meditation, then that's the main quality of Mahamudra, that's the main difference. When you're talking about sutra, that differentiates it from a {ta tri}, that differentiates it from other presentations of emptiness. The fact that you're taking your mind as the object. You're investigating the emptiness of your mind. Okay?

Does that mean you just sit and watch your thoughts go by and that's going to help you see emptiness? You've been doing that your whole life and nothing happened yet. Okay? So that's a fallacy, that's a dharma rumor. Just watching your thoughts fade, like sitting very quietly and watching your thoughts fade, that's a dharma rumor. There's a joke in the scriptures. They say, rabbits do that a lot and they don't see emptiness. [laughter] Then is it some kind of light that you see in your mind, clear light or something like that?

Clear light is just a synonym for emptiness, okay? It doesn't have anything to do with some kind of light that is colorless. Know what I mean? When somebody says "clear light," you kind of see some kind of color... I don't know, I see like Sprite instead of Coke, [laughter] and it's all clear and you can see through it or something like that.... it's not like that. Clear light's just another word for emptiness. So it doesn't mean becoming aware of some weird quality of your mind... it doesn't mean that. And it's not a Mahamudra... by the time you get done with the six kinds of emptiness, you won't make the mistake of thinking that it's just sitting down and watching your mind. And not judging, they say: Oh, don't judge yourself, just let the thoughts come by. "I'd like to kill the person sitting next to me." [laughter] "Oh, just watch it." [laughter] "Let it fade." [laughs] There's no point to that, there's really no point to it. That's not a meditation on emptiness. Is it useful? It could be. If someone starts doing it, they could start being very aware of the state of their mind. So we would say that the people who teach Mahamudra that way could very well be Buddhas. No problem. Is it useful? Yes. Is it the ultimate way to explain it? No. And that's very common. Who taught the five wrong ideas of emptiness?

[student: Buddha.]

Lord Buddha. No dummy, okay? [laughter] All right? So you can say, this is not the ultimate method, but you can't say that this person is stupid, or this tradition is dumb, or people shouldn't do that, or something like that. It could be very useful for certain people. It obviously is. So the people who teach that could be fully enlightened Buddhists. So we have to say that. But when you get into a debate, then you have to say, here's our take on Mahamudra, and this is why it's beneficial and then you can actually help that person come up a little higher. And the sixth presentation of emptiness is indisputably Nagarjuna's and Lord Buddha's, and you can see it, you can smell it. When you get to it, you'll know. It'll have a different feeling, and you'll see... and logically, you'll see it's unassailable, you can't disprove it, much less after you see it directly, but even logically you can't... logically it's airtight and there's no problem, you'll see it when you get to it, okay?

So Mahamudra differs from other presentations of emptiness is that you are using the mind as the object which you investigate whether it's empty or not, and how it is empty or not. And we'll get into that especially on Sunday. But the main difference is that you're taking your own mind as the object. Last thing to say before we take a short break... and Mutradamabhadra says, and by the way, there are four other differences between just standing up and teaching somebody emptiness and standing up and teaching them Mahamudra. There are four other benefits, and I'm going to write those benefits for you. This is why Mahamudra is perhaps a very beneficial way of teaching {tawa}, or worldview. So you can even think of Mahamudra as being a subcategory of {ta tri}. Meaning all the explanations of emptiness are a big category, and under there, there's a certain amount of teachings on Mahamudra. Which ones? The ones that take the mind as the object, okay? So taking the mind as the object which you investigate, when you're examining emptiness, has the following advantages. And this is how Mutradamabhadra leaves it. He says, hey, by the way, there's four advantages of doing it with your mind. Rather than staring at a pen or something like that. And here's what he says.

Say {mik-ten} [repeat] {charla} [repeat] {mik-ten} [repeat] {charla} [repeat]. {mik-ten} means the object of your meditation, okay? Like are you trying to visualize some tantric deity? Are you trying to visualize your lama's face? Are you trying to visualize all the steps of some Lam Rim meditation? {charla} means to see it in your mind, for it to come up in your mind. {la} means easy. So {charla} means, what's your favorite ice-cream? {charla}, it's not like a big trouble to visualize it. You see Ben & Jerry's face, it says Cherry Garcia on it, it's kind of a dark brown package, that's {charla}. Or the person at work who gives you the most trouble. {charla}. See what I mean? It's not a big problem to visualize them. Easy to think of them. What is the object of meditation... what is the object you're examining to see if its empty or not in a Mahamudra meditation?

[students: The mind.]

Your mind. So if you can't imagine your mind, you're having trouble. [laughs] If you can't think of your mind... it is what you're thinking, see what I mean? Okay. So it's not like you've gotta visualize a deity with twelve arms and a different thing in each hand, or different color eyes and different color hair, all you've got to do is think. Okay? [laughs] [laughter] Okay. So {mik-ten charla}, it means come on, the easiest thing to get to your mind is your mind. Sometimes really distancing yourself from your mind and looking at your mind is a little harder. I don't think it's exactly that easy. But his point is that you don't have to take a picture around with you, you don't need a statue or anything, you just sit down, close your eyes and think. And then you've already got the object of examination before you. Because it's your own mind and very convenient to carry around with you. It's there all the time. Just think. And then you have your object of meditation. And then we're going to examine that object to see if it's empty or not. By the way, the results of that are profound. By the end of this weekend, when you learn how to do an emptiness meditation on your own mind, it's really cool. A really good meditation is one that is very profound and you'll be able to do that by the end of the weekend. And you'll also know the five common errors that people have made through the last two and a half thousand years with the same meditation. Okay, that's the first advantage.

Second advantage... by the way, even if you don't know Tibetan, write the English. We were in Australia, at one of the FPMT Centers, and we had a really nice time and there was this couple that has a small Dharma Center with eight people came, and they went home and now they have their courses in the English letters. They taught a whole course themselves. They don't know Tibetan. But they did the whole course with these letters. And it was beautiful. And they did the whole Diamond Cutter and eight people came. It was really beautiful. It helps to explain the concepts if you have the original sources. Say {chingwa} [repeat] {tramo} [repeat] {chu la} [repeat], {chingwa} [repeat] {tramo} [repeat] {chu la}. {chingwa tramo} we talked about the last class here I think. What was the last course we had here?

[student: Meditation.]

Yeah, meditation. Do you guys remember {chingwa} and {gupa}? What's {chingwa}?

[student: Dullness.]

{chingwa} is a kind of dullness during meditation. Heavy {chingwa} or what we call gross {chingwa}, {chingwa rakpa}, is what you get if you meditate after eating three bowls of icecream [laughter] and I can attest to that. We had this Tibetan doctor over at our place in New York about two weeks ago and I downed three bowls of ice-cream and she's sitting there watching me. And then she said, you're going to get phlegm. [laughter] Anyway, if you tried to meditate right after that, you're going to get {chingwa rakpa}, I mean, obvious dullness. If you don't get enough sleep and then the next afternoon in a warm room you try to meditate, that's obvious {chingwa}. We're not talking about that. We're talking about {chingwa tramo}, subtle dullness, the biggest enemy of meditation, according to Je Tsongkhapa and all the great masters. No one's going to not notice if you fall asleep and hit your head on the closet, which I've done, [laughs] during a {chingwa rakpa} attack. But {chingwa tramo} is more dangerous. {chingwa tramo} is you're meditating really good, and you're not moving, and the object is fairly clear, but you're just spaced out on it. And if you try to meditate for more than 45 minutes, I'd say you really have to watch this one. If you think you're doing two, three hours well, because your body's not moving and you have the object loosely, you could have {chingwa tramo}. {chingwa tramo} is like you're just spacing out on it. Like you have some dull awareness of the object, your body is in perfect meditation posture, your breath is real slow and nice and nothing's happening, there's no {ngar}. What's {ngar}?

[student: Intensity.]

{ngar} is intensity. The vividness of the object. Like you're not working towards some vivid quality of the object. It's just dull. And you can do that for years and nothing will progress. And I've had Western people say to me, I can meditate pretty good, I can sit pretty good, but I don't feel like I've progressed in my meditation. That's {chingwa tramo}, which is the biggest enemy of meditation. Why? Because it feels good and you're not aware of it. You're aware of it if you hit your head on the closet. But you can have {chingwa tramo} for years and think you're doing pretty good. That's dangerous. {chu}—you know the word and it's very mysterious {chu}. This is the {chu} in [dorje chu pa], diamond cutter. It means to cut. {chu} or the practice of {chu}, termination, is to cut. So {chu} means to cut. {la} is the same as "up here". {la} means easy. So what's it saying? It's easy to eliminate subtle dullness. Why? You do other kinds of emptiness meditation, there's a chance you can get into subtle dullness. In this one it's unlikely. Why?

[student: Because you're watching your own mind.]

You're watching your own mind. [laughs] You can't be watching your own mind and having {chingwa tramo}, you see what I mean? To really be aware of your own mind and investigating your own mind, it has to be bright, it has to be clear, it has to be moving. This is going to be an analytical meditation. You're going to be looking at it from different angles. And if you're in an analytical meditation on your mind, then by definition the mind is not stalled. So Mahamudra has that second advantage. That approach, of choosing the mind as the object, has the advantage that it's very hard to space out and still be doing Mahamudra, because you're watching your own mind, your own mind is the object of the meditation.

Number three. Say {gupa} [repeat] {rang shuk kii} [repeat] {dah} [repeat] {gupa} [repeat] {rang shuk ki} [repeat] {gak} [repeat]. {gupa} is what? The opposite of {chingwa}. {gupa} is thinking about what you have to do later in the day while you're meditating in the morning. That's perfect {gupa}. To me that's the most common obstacle of my meditation. What do I have to do with project number three today? What kind of breakfast am I going to have when I get out of this stupid meditation? [laughter] That's {gupa}, the mind going out. {rang shuk ki} means "automatically". {gak} means "it will stop". And again, the point is that you're watching your own mind. So your awareness of where your thoughts are is very strong. So if they start to wander, you're going to notice it. Your {sheshin}, your ability to... {sheshin} means your watchdog state of mind, the mental alarm that goes off when you start to wander. That will be at a very high intensity. Since you're meditating on your own mind, the minute the mind starts to go off to another object, you're going to catch it. So {gupa rang shuk ki gak}. Those are two sides of the meditation, two advantages of meditating on your own mind. You're not likely to go wandering off to some other object if your mind is what you're focussing on.

Okay, number four. Say {min je} [repeat] {kyepar chen} [repeat] {min je} [repeat] {kyepar chen} [repeat]. {min} is an important word in tantra. {min} means to ripen somebody, ripen or mature something. Like {min ge du way} means, in colloquial Tibetan, is this fruit ripe or not? You poke it and you say {min ge du way}, is it ripe or not? {kyerim} is a {min je} for {dzogrim}. {kyerim} {min}'s you to practice {dzogrim}. For example, in tantra, the stage of what they call "creation" ripens you for the state of completion. So the concept of {anawong}, an initiation, is for the purposes of {min}ing you, to prepare you for actually getting the instructions and learning your vows. So the idea of {minba} is very important in tantra. Ripening or doing some cooking process on your mindstream. Like some quick ripening process on your mindstream, gardening, superfertilizer. {min je} is a very specific word in tantra that means some kind of action or practice which will bring you along very quickly, which will ripen you very quickly, like you start out a schmuck, and then you get some {min je} and suddenly you're ready to practice tantra. See what I mean? The idea is to plant {min je}s in students' mindstreams, and then suddenly, a year later, there's some kind of amazing person who's ready to practice tantra properly. That's a big concept in tantra, {min je}, okay? {min je} means some kind of practice or teaching that accelerates the growth of your mind stream, which makes it ready for tantra, okay? {kyeparr chen} means "very powerful", "very special".

In his last remarks, Mutradamabhadra uses words that mean "supercharged". He says {min je kyepar chen}. Meaning what? If you practice Mahamudra properly, meaning watching the emptiness of your own mind, learning what emptiness is, and then taking your own mind as the object, then when you go on to the Tantric practice of Mahamudra, it will be a blow-out, you'll be totally ready. And you'll just slide into it, very easily. Like you know you're ready for tantra when you learn a practice or you get an initiation and it feels like coming home. Like you're totally ready for it. It's not like some kind of headache or something like that. It's very natural to slide into that way of seeing things, or something like that. So that means you've had good {min jes}. So the fourth advantage of Mahamudra... over what? Normal {ta tii}, normal teachings on emptiness, general teachings on emptiness. We're not talking tantra as opposed to sutra. We're already talking about the sutra form of Mahamudra, right?

Don't make the mistake that Nomohan Rinpoche made. He said, oh, oh, Mahamudra's special because you see clear light. No, no, no, we're talking sutra.

Why is it special in sutra? Because you pick your own mind as the object, and then all of these four advantages come. It's got all these four cool things about this kind of emptiness teaching as opposed to emptiness teachings in general. Taking your mind as the object is what differentiates Mahamudra from emptiness teachings in general. And then, what's the advantage of that? Those four advantages. What's the first one?

[student: {mik-ten charla}]

Yeah, yeah, if you can't visualize your mind, you have a problem. If you can't think of your mind while you're there, in it... [laughs]. That's like saying, I look in the mirror and I just can't see anything. All right, then you have a problem. Second one?

[student: Overcoming subtle dullness.]

Yeah, you're not going to be spacing out on it and examining it at the same time, because it is the examiner and the examinee. At the same moment? No. One microsecond apart, by the way. Don't become a Mind-Only. Third one?

[student: [unclear]]

Yeah, your mind is not going to wander if you're standing over it, watching it, to see it's emptiness. Theoretically, it would be a lot easier to avoid thinking about breakfast. Theoretically. Number four.

[student: [unclear]]

You know, as opposed to general emptiness teachings, if you meditate on the emptiness of your mind, it prepares you for tantra very effectively. Then when you get to tantra you'll be totally ready. It sets you up for tantra in a very nice way, a very strong way. We're going to take a break and then we're going to come back to the emptiness. I'm going to work with a visible object. This is the tradition, particularly in the Vajrayogini... you take a visible object like... this is the ancient Sakya tradition. In those days, it was a conch shell. We happen to use a pen. So we're going to take an object, and tonight we're going to cover the first two types of emptiness about it that are not real what?

[student: Emptiness.]

Emptiness. [laughs] But I want to get you used to it, okay? And we're going to talk about the emptiness of the pen on two levels. And then we're going to do a Mahamudra meditation on that. And then we'll move to the mind later. So take a break now, refresh yourselves and then come back ready to sit a little bit, all right? Maybe five, ten minutes.

[Mandala]

A couple of announcements. People asked me about our schedule. Ora, you can make a schedule?

[Ora: I have something.]

Yeah, we have the schedules set for the next year, actually for the next four years. [laughs] [laughter] So if you'd like to see it, Ora will have some next class, tomorrow morning. Basically, there'll be three courses in New York. We're going to review the whole seven-year baby Geshe course in one year. We'll be going through the whole fifteen courses in one year, just a final review. And then a tour in Ireland... we're doing a five-day mini-series on Diamond Cutter on Mongolian National TV, that'll be really nice, then tours of Taiwan, Japan, Singapore and Western Australia. And then late next year, another trip to India and some of the FPMT Centers in South Asia, like Bodhgaya and I think Kathmandu and some other places. And then the last part of that trip, we'll be doing three weeks with a very high Geshe, whom I think is one of the greatest teachers alive, who taught us the Mind-Only School. About 15-20 students came in October and he didn't finish. He still has about 3 weeks to go. So that's like a 4-5 hour intensive everyday, immediately translated into English. I think he's one of the greatest teachers in the Tibetan monastery system. Personally, I think he's the greatest scripture teacher. So if you'd like to catch that, anybody's welcome to come to anything. You just have to get there. And we'll help you get there, but we can't pay for it. You have to figure out. Aside from that, everything else is free. They're very kind to us at Sera and wherever we go, so you just have to be able to get there. And Ora'll have a schedule tomorrow to give to people. Okay. Two kinds of emptiness about this pen, and then we'll meditate on it. Okay? Say {tak} [repeat] {chik} [repeat] {rangwang} [repeat] {chen gyi} [repeat] {dak} [repeat] {mepa} [repeat]. {tak} [repeat] {chik} [repeat] {rangwang} [repeat] {chen gyi} [repeat] {dak} [repeat] {mepa} [repeat]. Okay. This is the very first kind of emptiness. Is it emptiness?

[student: No.]

No. Not according to the highest schools, all right. Not according to Nagarjuna, Lord Buddha, everybody else. But it has been taught as a kind of emptiness, or more correctly, selflessness. What is it? {dak pa}... the first word {dak} means "unchanging", "permanent". {chik} means "whole", like one big whole thing. Singular. {rangwachen} means "independent," "selfstanding". {kyi} means "of", it's just an adjective, it sticks the rest on to the noun. Don't worry about {kyi}. {dak} means "self", a "self". {mepa} means "doesn't exist". You can say "selfnature". I think "self" is not such a good translation for "atman" or something like that. It just means the nature of the thing. We don't talk about pens as having themselves, like you can't hurt the pen's feelings or something like that. It's a little weird. When they talk about selflessness or noself, what they mean is no self-nature, or no nature like that. No nature like what? By the way, we're not doing Mahamudra yet because we're not going to use what as our object?

[student: Mind.]

Yeah, mind. We're going to use a pen. Okay? So we'll slip into Mahamudra later. But I want you to get the six kinds of emptiness with the pen and then we'll move it to your mind on Sunday. Okay? And it's important to do that. But in the meantime, work on the pen, because it's easier like this. We're talking about {tawa} and we will be talking about {tawa}. {tawa} means "worldview".

How do you look at your world? How do you see your world? According to Buddhism, if you get it right, everything can happen. You can become a beautiful sexy tantric deity in this lifetime. If you don't get your {tawa} right, there's no hope, you will die, you will get old and die. So {tawa} separates the men from the boys. You've got to get your {tawa} right. {tawa} means "how you view your world".

So, do you see the pen? Yes. Is that worldview? No. Is it {tawa}? No. You're just seeing a pen. It's how you think about a pen that's the difference. So when we talk about the emptiness of the pen, you always have some kind of rose-colored glasses on. If you have rose-colored glasses on, you see it one way. If you have green-colored glasses on, you see it a different way. {tawa} is the filter through which you see the world. Okay?

Your worldview determines how you see things. It's not talking about looking at the pen per se. There's a state of mind called {tsema} or {Skt: pramana} which perceives a pen. We're not talking about that. That's normal, correct or valid perception of a pen. Am I holding a pen in my hand? Yes. You do have a valid perception of it. Why is it valid? You can confirm it. Come up here and I'll draw a little Hitler mustache on your face to confirm that it's a pen. [laughter] That's a {tsema}, that's a {pramana}. You have them all day long by the millions. You see a pen in my hand, that's correct, there's nothing wrong with that. But now you've got to get subtle. As you look at the pen, you have a certain feeling about it. You have a certain... in the Princeton Religion Department they used to call it a visceral presupposition. You have a gut feeling about the pen. Know what I mean? You have a certain assumption about the pen. You are seeing the pen through a certain kind of glasses. Your perception of the pen is constantly, always, colored by certain suppositions about the pen that come with the territory. You have them, deep in your gut. You have a certain feeling about the pen. What's the first one? By the way, to catch yourself, to see the filters while you're wearing them, is hard. To describe to someone their worldview while they're doing their worldview is a little slippery. But you've got to get used to it.

So the first wrong way of seeing the pen, seeing the pen as having some nature that it doesn't have, is that you feel like it's going to last, it's got some kind... it's the sense that it's unchanging. You don't see it as some spurt of pen in a huge line... a history of something like that. You don't see it as a flash in the dark or something like that. To you, it has some kind of solidity, some kind of permanence. And you assume that about the pen. You assume that about your body, about your house, about your job, about your friendships, about the people around you, and then when someone dies, when the pen runs out of ink, when the car gets in an accident, suddenly that bubble bursts, that worldview is shaken at that moment. Then you go back to having it again. But there's a sense about the pen... is it the perception about the pen? No, that's valid. No problem with that. Buddhas perceive pens. Okay? They don't have wrong views. But there is a filter in your mind that looks at the pen and feels as though it has some solidity and not that it's some event which is flashing by your TV screen and is soon going to be out of your life, like your body, your mind and your own name. Like you feel some kind of permanence about life, you feel like there's some kind of solidity about life. And even about this pen, you have some feeling like it will be around for a while, which is unfounded. The pen is hurtling towards its destruction, as are you. Your name won't be around in a certain number of years. Nobody will remember you. There'll be some grandchildren throwing out your picture asking, who was that? [laughter] Know what I mean?

Really. You drive by names on the highway and say, who's that named after? Nobody remembers anymore. This is a great man, he was a Governor, he was a Senator. And people ask you, who was that? Still the name is on the street and nobody remembers who they were.

So that's the first kind of emptiness. According to the most basic schools, Abhidharma schools, and the other schools would also say, like even one kind of Madhyamika school would say that the fact that it's not way, is one kind of emptiness. The fact that it's not that way is a kind of emptiness. The denial that a pen has the kind of permanence or wholeness that you feel when you look at the pen, the denial of that, is emptiness, the lack of that is emptiness, is one kind of emptiness. Is it the ultimate kind of emptiness? No. Is it helpful? Yes. Why? Because the misperception... which is what? The idea that it has some permanence or that's it not changing as we speak creates mental afflictions. You get upset, you get angry. Some part of you says a relationship will last forever. Some part of you says your house will be there when you need it. Some part of you says these clothes, or this body, is going to last for a while. And it's all wrong. Those misperceptions cause you suffering. And that's a test, basically, of whether your view is correct or not. If a view causes you suffering or disturbance, that's the definition of a mental affliction.

By the way, that's the litmus test of samsara. If an idea or a viewpoint, a worldview, can upset you, {rangen deka [unclear] sempa?}... the definition of a mental affliction, if it can upset you, it's something that upsets your peace of mind. If you can have a mental affliction, you must be having a wrong worldview. They are always rooted in misperceiving something. So that's the most basic one. I want you to practice. By the end of this meditation, you'll be able to go through six phases of emptiness with this pen. Now I'll say, switch to number two. Then they say {pelma}... {guba} means.. I'll say, think about this pen's emptiness number one. Think about this pen's emptiness number two. Shift to number three, go to number four, go to number five, slide into number six, which is the real one, okay? And that will help you. Then in the Abidharma they say, do one, three, six, five, four. And be able to shift the perceptions of this pen. Just be able to sit there and see six different kinds of emptiness like shifting slides in a projector. Take off those glasses, put on these glasses, take off those glasses... you know. And when you can do that, then your emptiness meditation is getting pretty good.

So the first kind of emptiness this pen has is that it doesn't have that kind of quality. Now we go to Kedrup Je. Kedrup Je had a cool meditation. He said, hold up the pen, tell people to look at it as a pen, just look at it as a normal pen. You don't have to worry about how you're looking at it. I'll shut up for 30 seconds so you can just look at it. Makes me feel like the Statue of Liberty sometimes. [laughter] Now try to catch yourself thinking of it as being something lasting or permanent. Try to catch yourself doing that. Now drop that and go back to the first one, just looking at the pen, not thinking anything but just looking at it.

Now go back to the second one. Try to catch yourself seeing it as something lasting. That state of mind is disappointed when it runs out or you lose it. Now the antidote state of mind, okay? Next time I pull it out, the antidote state of mind, the emptiness state of mind. Wisdom. When I hold it up again, see it as a flash in history, see it as a comet flashing across the screen of your life. You and it are hurtling towards destruction. Try and see it that way. It's just going to be around for an instance.

{??karma mahame rabde [unclear] gyume sume chubeda [unclear]}... the last lines of the Diamond Cutter Sutra. Everything is like a bubble, everything is like dew, everything is like... see it that way. When I hold it up again, see it as just a flash in your life. It's going to be gone shortly. Then you won't get so... the mental afflictions about when you lose it, or when somebody steps on it and breaks it, won't be so bad. And that's one kind of wisdom. Ready? This is the third way of looking at it.

Okay, one more time. We'll go through three modes of this pen, okay? What are the modes? First one. Just look at it, no judgment, no decisions about it, no {che gom}, no examination. It's just a pen, a nice pen. Hope he puts it down soon. [laughs] [laughter] Second one. What? The feeling that it's going to last for a while. Like trusting it: "you'll be around for a while, won't you? We need you." That feeling that it's going to be around for a while, down here somewhere: "oh, that'll be there for a while. At least another half-hour for sure." By the way, that's a source of a great suffering and mental pain. Things that you innately or inherently... you feel deep in your heart that this relationship's gotta last another week at least. [laughter] Know what I mean? And when it doesn't, you feel so disappointed. That's one kind of grasping to self-existence that's triggering a mental affliction. Is it the ultimate one? Not at all. But it's one kind.

And then the last way of looking at it? See it the way it really is. The subtle impermanence of the pen. They say it's very difficult to perceive. Normally you see subtle impermanence just before you see the true nature of dependent origination, which is just before you see emptiness. That could all happen in about two weeks' period. They come very close on the heels of each other. To really be aware of the subtle impermanence of a pen is extremely difficult. It takes great yoga, great meditation. But to really look at this pen and to appreciate that it's flashing out of existence as we talk, as are we.... it takes a great deal of spiritual maturity and sophistication to see that. Especially as you're using the pen. Then you don't get disappointed, you know.

Like if someone close to you dies, you feel sad for them and all that, but you're not surprised or overwhelmed, you just clearly see that it's the way it was going to be anyway. You don't freak out when things happen. When you suddenly lose your arm or something. Really. I mean, a real Buddhist, even at this level of emptiness, which is number one, down here, is a lot more well-adjusted. They can cope with sudden changes and things like that because they were anticipating this thing going away. So that's one kind of emptiness.

Now we go to the second kind of emptiness, and then we'll sit down and do a short meditation. By the way, those of you who care, in the Abhidharma school, that's one of the objects, {gakja}, rejected by the theory of emptiness. And even in the higher schools, which is the Swatantrika group of the Madhyamika School, they believe that's one kind of lack of self-nature. They would call it obvious lack of self-nature to a person. They categorize it that way. If you care. It's in your reading. That's the last thing you have to write tonight, okay?

Here's the next one. Say {rang gya} [repeat] {tupa} [repeat] {dzeyu kyi} [repeat] {dak} [repeat] {mepa} [repeat]. {rang gya} [repeat] {tupa} [repeat] {dzeyu kyi} [repeat] {dak} [repeat] {mepa} [repeat]. {rang gya tupa} is an idiom, okay? An idiom. {rang gya tupa} means self-standing, self-supporting. In modern Tibet, they say {ranggo tunba}. Like refugee help programs should make them {ranggo tunba}, should make them self-supporting. {dzeyu} means "substantial", substantial. {dak mepa} means there's no such self as that, that self doesn't exist. There is no self which is self-standing and substantial. And you hear hundreds of explanations about these things and some of them seem to be pretty wild. They don't really appreciate what the scripture says or what it was meant to convey. {dzeyu} or "substantial" is a code word. This whole thing is a code word for something else. And it's explained in a very beautiful book by Changya Rupa Dorje who's a previous life of Pabongka Rinpoche, who wrote four incredible volumes on the schools of Buddhism. And he says, in this case, "substantial" means a driver of the five parts of a person who's not in the person, like the director of the show. It's that feeling that you're in charge of your arms and legs and mind. Like behind it all, up here somewhere, like Lama Zopa's beautiful statue that he's planning, there's an empty place up there and there's a crane conductor.. what do you call him? ... crane operator moving everything. That there's that kind of person behind it all. And you feel that sense sometimes, right? I'm in charge of my body. I'm also in charge of my mind. I call the shots. Who's the "I" outside of your mind and your body? But you have that sense? It's a sense of ownership almost. You can call it a sense of ownership. I am controlling my body, I am controlling my mind. Hey, didn't you notice you are your body and mind? It's the false sense that there's a person behind it all, running it all, as if you are the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain. And then the body's going like that and you're having thoughts... the idea that you can control it, the idea that you're in control and that you're not it, is {rang gya tupa dzeyu kyi dak mepa}, okay? That sense of things. How does it apply to a pen? And this is very important, the belief that you control the destiny of this pen. "I own it." What does it mean to own something? I own this shirt. I own this {tunga}. What does it mean? What does it mean in general terms?

[student: You control what's going to happen to it.]

Yeah, I control what's going to happen to it. Also I have the right to destroy it and other people don't. Like that. Like I have the right to throw it out. If someone came into my room and spilled something on it, that would be bad. Like I decide where this thing goes and other people are not supposed to. [laughs] That's called stealing. Know what I mean? But the idea of ownership, I bought that house, I paid the money, now I can decide what kind of color to paint it, I decide who's going to stay in it, that's the idea of ownership, the idea that you're running it. So it's some kind of assumption that... ownership means that you have the commonly accepted right, among the people of your society, that you get to decide what happens to that object. Okay? That's what ownership means. Is it true? Can you tell me that 24 hours from now, you will be in charge of your shirt that you have on now? Not at all. [laughs] Tibetans have a joke. They say {unclear}. It means that you don't know that 24 hours from now your shirt won't be looking for a new owner. Okay? Know what I mean? Forget your house, you don't even control your nose, your ear, your eye. Okay? You can't tell me that in 24 hours whether you're going to have it or not. The idea that you own it is a fallacy, it's wrong, it's a wrong worldview. It's a foolish worldview. You don't even own the shirt on your back. Why? Because you can't control its destiny. That's what ownership means. You can't tell me you're going to own it. You could be a corpse tomorrow at this time.

The reason we have to move the car is because somebody's aunt became a corpse while we were talking, suddenly. They have to go and decide what to do with her things and her clothes. She owned them, right?

So the idea that you own things is a fallacy. There's something else going on. See what I mean? There's some other powers at work. It's not the way it seems. That's another kind of emptiness. There's a {gakja}, which means a self-existent thing that's not there, which is the idea that you can own something. And then there's the truth, which is the emptiness of that {gakja} which means the non-existence of the {gakja}. You don't own anything. And you don't decide the fate of anything. Even your own body and mind. You can't tell me you'll be in this body 24 hours from now. Okay? The idea of ownership is false. That's a kind of misunderstanding of reality, and the lack of that misunderstanding is a perception of emptiness. See what I mean? To realize that that's true is one kind of emptiness. Is it ultimate emptiness? No. Does it help? Yeah. If you understand that, you won't get so angry when your students come in your room at night and steal your Cheerios [laughter]... and the next morning you get up and you shake it out and.... you know... because you thought you owned it. [laughs] A lot fewer disappointments if you appreciate that you really don't own anything. I mean, you're a lot more well-adjusted person if you realize that ownership is not real, that you really don't own anything. Then you can let go easier.

Is it nirvana to understand that? No. Can you reach nirvana by thinking only that? No. You must see number 6 to reach Nirvana. You must understand emptiness flavor number six to reach nirvana. But this one is very helpful for dealing with mental afflictions and stuff like that. And then some presentations of Buddhism, they're only dealing with number one, or they're only dealing with number two. That's helpful, it's good for people, it's not the real thing. Does it mean those people are teaching false dharmas? No. Why? Lord Buddha taught this. For certain people, it works better. So think like that. Think like that, think, oh, that's useful, but it's not the real one. Okay? Ready. We're going to look at the pen, just as a pen.

Then, we're going to look at the pen as if somebody owned it, like LMB owns this pen. If I pocketed it on my way out of the lecture, will somebody get upset? Know what I mean? Like appreciate the ownership of the pen.

[silence]

And then think of it as being something... come on, nobody owns it. It could be taken away by... it will be taken away by karma when karma is ready. It will steal it away. Karma owns it. Okay, ready? What's the first one? Just look at it. Without the glasses. You're just having a {pramaṇa}, a {tsema}, a valid perception. Why? What's your mind... what's the statement in your head at that moment? There's a pen there. Is it correct? Yes. Has it got anything to do with emptiness? No. Does a Buddha see a pen there? Yes. Ready?

[silence]

Now try to catch yourself feeling that Michael Roach is controlling this pen, or LMB owns this pen, or someone's in charge of this pen. Try to catch your emotion or your feeling about it that way. Which is a false emotion.

[silence]

Then lastly, see it as something that's totally at the mercy of karmic forces. If I have the karma to use it for the next 30 seconds, I will. If I don't, I won't. Who's running the show? Mr. Karma. Not me, not LMB, get rid of the idea that there's an owner to this pen, that someone's in control of this pen, okay? Try to think of it that way. Ready? It's hard because it's new. As you go up the ladder of emptiness, it gets harder and harder. This one's a little harder than the last one. When I open it up again and you see the pen, think of it as truly being something which no one really owns, no one really controls it, it depends on our karma. Ready?

[silence]

Got it?

Number one, just look at it, no judgement about it. Like if you had rose-colored glasses on, would you still see the pen? Yes, you'd just see it with the wrong aspect, or the wrong color. See what I mean? {tawa} is the same. Everyone's seeing a pen. Aryas, Arhats, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, normal people, they're all seeing a pen. But then the coloring is totally different, the aspect is totally different. Ready?

[silence]

Now try to catch yourself thinking of it as something that I'm controlling at this moment, or that LMB owns, at this moment. Ready?

[silence]

Which is a kind of grasping to the self-existence of the pen, but not the ultimate one.

[silence]

Last one is hard, but if you get it, you get to go home. [laughs] [laughter] Ready? In this one, we're going to try to see it as really not having any owner. It's temporarily in my hand because I have the karma to have it in my hand, and temporarily you have the karma to see it right. And those are all hurtling towards their end also. The idea that I own it is false. See it as being something with no owner. Ready?

[silence]

Okay. I'm not going to do a formal meditation tonight because it's late and it's hot and people went to work today and traveled today, but I thought if you have any questions, we can talk about that. I think you had a question?

[student: Yes.]

We'll just do ten minutes and then we'll stop, okay?

[student: If you're looking at the pen, if you don't have any stories about it, or any filter or any conversation about it, you're just seeing the object, which is a valid perception, right?]

Yeah.

[student: This was my experience. I didn't have any story about it. So I had to generate the conversation that the pen has permanence, etcetera, etcetera. For me it's not a hook. The pen is not a hook, because it doesn't elicit or generate a conversation or something, right? In this experience. But if something else occurred out there, and if it was a hook for me, then that filter would be more right, or that conversation would be more...]

He's talking about the degree of color in the glass. Like how rose-colored is it. You see? Like if I was talking about *your* pen. Know what I mean? [laughter] If I'd said, Michael's pen, then, because of the intensity of the two misperceptions of the pen, (A) thinking it was going to be there tomorrow when you needed it, (B) thinking that you were going to have it tomorrow, and that you controlled it and I don't have any right to break it. Yeah, those are obviously two emotions that create mental afflictions, and that's a sign that there's some kind of grasping, some kind of misperception there. When you draw the Wheel of Life, we talked about it last night, we didn't get to the center, right? The Vinaya Sutra says, at the end, that when you draw it, draw the pig with the rooster and the snake coming out of his mouth. Don't draw... nowadays they draw them in a circle, each one has the other one in it. You can check it out. Do you have one here?

[student: One at the door.]

As there should be, one at the door. Check it out. I don't know how this one is, but the old one, the Vinaya Sutra says paint it with the pig, then the snake and the rooster are coming out of its mouth. Meaning feelings of hatred and feelings of desire are grounded in misunderstanding this object which you can obviously see. If it was your pen, then there'd be a story about it. Then there'd be...

[student: Well, whatever...]

By the way we're going to get to your mind later, but a pen's easier. Any other questions? Yeah?

[student: Like just look at the pen, and then try to catch yourself, can you describe that a little more, because it seems like I could either sit there just looking at the pen, and try and catch myself, but it's more like... I don't know.]

Yeah. When I say worldviews, ignorance in this case, worldviews are feelings, and it's hard to catch yourself doing it. It's hard to catch yourself doing it. Forget number one or two, when you get to six it's really hard. But just to catch yourself thinking that the things in your life have some kind of stability, that they have some kind of permanence, that you can reasonably expect that car to be there tomorrow, or that relationship not to break up by the end of this week, those are all false, that... it's a feeling in your heart, in your gut, I get it right around here. It's some kind of feeling like, yeah, that thing should be around. I mean, if I come here and teach tomorrow morning, I have some feeling that this pen is still going to be here, and that's a false kind of feeling, a kind of ignorance. This thing is flashing through my life, flashing, my whole life is flashing. By the time I get to the end, the whole fifty, sixty years doesn't mean a thing. What happened? I'm 45 years old, what happened. I just remembered going to college, and suddenly, hey, I'm 45. Know what I mean? Like the idea that you have any permanence, that the things that you're using right now or the people you know have any permanence, they'll be shattered, give it a few years, let people start dying around you, and then suddenly wow, that's all. It's that feeling that the things around you have any lasting quality to them. You have to catch yourself thinking that. It's a kind of ignorance. It's not the ultimate ignorance, but it's a very bad misperception because it causes a lot of pain. Okay. Yes?

[student: [unclear] Is that really suffering, or is it suffering when you are attached and you get all upset because it's not there?]

He said, is the suffering to expect the pen to be here tomorrow, or is it suffering to be upset when it's gone and you thought it would. I'd say one is the cause of the other. One is a kind of ignorance, which is the source of all suffering.

[student: You're not going to wake up tomorrow morning... [unclear]]

[laughs] Actually I did. [laughs] [laughter]

[student: Tomorrow morning...]

Right, right. No, I'm not saying....

[student: ...just have a reasonable expectation that it will be there.]

Yeah, yeah, there is a reasonable expectation that it will be there. But if you get upset, that means your expectation was more than reasonable, okay? That's all. There's a reasonable expectation, but we always have more. We always have unreasonable expectations.

[student: Does it cause suffering to have a reasonable...]

Does it cause suffering to have a reasonable expectation that this pen will be here tomorrow. No, it wouldn't cause suffering? Are we capable of having that kind of reasonable expectation? That's hard. You're always wanting a little more than it's possible from impermanence.

[student: Is it a wrong view to get upset about anything?]

He asked, is it a wrong view to get upset about anything. This is a very good question. A barometer of whether you understand emptiness is whether you're capable of getting upset. The litmus test, the barometer which tells you whether you understand emptiness or not, is whether or not you get upset, because, it's very beautiful. {Tibetan: unclear} which means you cannot simultaneously appreciate the emptiness of an object and simultaneously have a bad emotion. Impossible! You cannot have a mental affliction about an object at the same moment that you're understanding its emptiness. Totally impossible. That's why Arhats have reached Nirvana. Because using their knowledge of emptiness, they understand perfectly this pen, and they can never get upset again. {Tibetan: unclear}

The definition of Nirvana is totally the incapacity to be upset again because you understand its emptiness so well, you're just totally happy, totally happy, can't be upset by anything any more. That's Nirvana. You could be sitting here tomorrow morning after reaching Nirvana tonight. To us you'd look the same but you'd be a totally different person, you just can't be upset by anything. What I'm trying to say is that you must misunderstand reality in order to get upset. You must not understand emptiness if you get upset. If you want to know how your emptiness meditation is going, see how much you're getting upset during the day. That's what I'm saying, the converse of that. See what I mean? Because they are what we call {nyenbo}, antidotes. They cannot coexist in one human brain in the same time. There ain't enough room in this town for both of us. Okay? [laughter] Know what I mean? Literally. Inside the human brain, you cannot consciously be aware of the emptiness of an object and also have a mental affliction. That's the whole beauty of emptiness, that's the whole goal. Yeah?

[student: If you understand that, does that mean that you can get upset?]

No. [laughs] [laughter] No, no. The more you appreciate its emptiness, the less you'll ever get upset about it. You've now got two pseudo-emptinesses. If you could even perceive those, you'd get a lot less upset. Right? When things suddenly go topsy-turvy in your life, you'd be like, oh yeah, I knew that was going to happen, because it's impermanent. It's not what my innate feeling of holding it to be unchanging was thinking. But because I was meditating on it a lot, I don't have a problem with it right now. You can get fired, lose all your salary, and then you're happy within five minutes. You say, yeah, that's the nature of those things, I knew that.

[student: There is a little bit of the shock factor.]

There is a little, but the better you get at it, I swear to god, you can lose everything in five minutes and you're like, okay, let's go on, let's move on. It gets... it's very useful. Like in business, the ability to see impermanence... I worked in a corporation for fifteen years and it's very powerful in running a business or running a family or running your life, or anything else, to be able to live with impermanence from a moment.... you lose account number two... okay, work on account number three, suddenly a million dollar deal lost. The great businessmen, and I'm not saying this is a goal, but the really good millionaire businessmen who are really good at it, they can lose huge amounts of money today and they don't get shaken at all.

They just say, let's move on, how do we do the next one? And that's a practice of impermanence. They're ready to change instantly when life goes like that. It's because you've been meditating on that kind of emptiness really well. Okay, last question.

[student: [unclear] if you are unattached, if you don't... what I'm trying to say is that if you don't have that attachment... how can you have love and compassion without suffering?]

Without what?

[student: Without suffering.]

He said how can you have love and attachment without suffering, compassion without suffering. I have to say this... I mean... to be able to cope with sudden changes and not get upset doesn't mean that you like them. See what I mean? What I mean is this... a Buddhist learns to roll with the punches of samsara because you're trying to remove samsara, because it's more efficient for removing samsara. See what I mean? It's more efficient for destroying suffering completely if you learn to cope with impermanence in the short term. But the goal is to remove it completely. The reason not to be upset is to learn to remove it completely. See what I mean?

You can work more efficiently to stop other peoples' pain if you don't get thrown by impermanence and not owning things. See what I mean? Then you're a lot better warrior for helping people because all kinds of terrible things can happen, and five minutes later, you're back to normal and you're helping them again. Let's say you've worked on some big project at Sera Monastery, like building a big water tower, and you put five years of your life into it. And suddenly there's an earthquake and the thing collapses. And then... what I'm saying is that if you've done this meditation, within five minutes, you're joyfully helping to build the next one. No kind of worries or craziness or anything like that. You're able to be more compassionate, because your own mind is clear. It's not like some... and by the way, it's not a goal to learn to live with the crap of life. Period. That is not the goal of Buddhism. It is presented as the goal of Buddhism and that's a Dharma rumor. It's not the goal of Buddhism to learn to sit there and smile as your friends die off, and as your body gets older and older. And as terrible things in this world happen that you can, with equanimity, sit there and watch them, and feel some kind of equanimity of, oh, this is the way it goes. That's a Dharma rumor of Buddhism. It's not true, that's not the goal of Buddhism.

The goal of Buddhism is to eradicate suffering in all forms. See what I mean? It's not to learn to put up with it. There's a big distinction between learning to sit and suffer quietly, perfectly, with a smile on your face. Or wiping out that suffering altogether. See what I mean? Big difference. And I'm afraid that Buddhism is often presented in the first light. You should get to a place where you're not attached to anything so you can watch children die of AIDS and watch people get crushed in car accidents and friends of yours have their breasts cut off and die of cancer and still be joyful. That's crap! The goal of Buddhism is to remove all of those events altogether. It's very interesting. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is to stop those events from happening at all. Big difference. You've got to get into that. Next to last question.

[student: Is it possible to have sadness without suffering?]

He said, is it possible to have sadness without suffering. Yes. Buddhas watch us and are compassionate. They are saddened by our condition, but they don't feel pain, they have this kind of sweetness. A really compassionate person, when they are observing someone's pain and trying to help them, their own emotion is of a sort of sweetness. You see? Real compassion feels sweet. It's a sweetness, but it's focussing on someone's pain. See what I mean? So that's a big difference. It's possible to have a sweet feeling of compassion about someone without suffering yourself. See what I mean? And that's a clear state of mind, that is totally compassionate and is absolutely working to help that person in the highest way possible at every moment. But it's not suffering. It's a different thing. Okay. We'll do a mandala and a dedication. See you tomorrow. What time?

[student: 10.]

10:00 clock? Okay. If you have a regular meditation cushion, bring it.

[Mandala]

[Dedication]

[End of Friday Night Talk.]

Saturday Morning Session

[Opening Prayers]

Good morning. Today we're going to start with a meditation because I think you're fresher in the first part of the class than in the last. I think one of the things that Western people seek the most in Buddhism is some kind of definable spiritual progress. You'd like to get to a point where you say, I reached a certain stage. That's why people are almost obsessed with statements in scripture about how long it takes to get shamatha, three months, four months, six months... I heard eight months. No I heard eleven, but you have to do this. And people think if they could just have some clear sign that they've reached some kind of stage... which {Bhumi} am I on? Which path am I on? You'd feel better if some lama could come along and say, okay, definitively, you have reached number three. And this is why. People would feel better.

Americans have this thing, you know, like when you're in school, you get degrees and diplomas and certificates and you've made it to a certain place and it's very important to us. It's not silly. It would be nice to know where you are. Basically there are five levels that you can go through. Five paths. And path here is a synonym for {tokpa}, meaning a stage of realization. And generally speaking, if you reach them, you probably won't drop back from them.

So these are five very specific levels that each one of us has to go through, spiritual milestones.

First one is true renunciation. That's when you're truly tired of things going up and down like a roller coaster, like you're really truly honestly tired, and you'd be willing to give up anything if you could stop it. So if somebody says, do you have a problem doing a three-month retreat with Lama Zopa on Vajrasattva, you don't even hesitate, you don't worry about your other obligations. It doesn't even occur to you to worry about it. You just want to do it because you want to get out so bad. So you have this ability to renounce, to be unattached to what you have and to go for it, if it's a real path. You've made a decision in your mind that you're tired of this process of things going up and down and up and down. And whatever it was that you were going to do during those three months, whatever you were hoping to achieve, it also is going to collapse someday. You get to the point where you realize that and you just decide, I'm willing to practice now.

By the way that doesn't mean you have to quit your job or divorce your wife or stuff like that. It just means you have to look at it a different way and be willing to do what you have to do, at the expense of those other things that aren't going to last. That's called {tsok jor tong gom mi-lob}, path of accumulation. You're accumulating energy, mainly to see energy. If you were on a Mahayana track at that point, you're also thinking of other people in the same sense, like I'm going to do this for other people. The best thing I can do for other people is to get my own rear end into a Buddha paradise. You hear people say, oh, he's a Bodhisattva. You ask why. They say, oh he always gives people a ride in his car. Something like that. But a real Bodhisattva is fixed, in fact the definition says, fixed on the state of enlightenment. Like I want to get there so I can really show other people how to do it. It's not so much thinking I want to get there for myself. It's more like thinking, I have to do that because I have to show other people how to do it. It's like learning piano so you can teach other people to play piano.

Suppose being able to play piano was the best thing in the world and you wanted to give that gift to everyone else in the world. Then first you'd have to learn how to play piano.

People ask me how much effort you need to meditate on emptiness. It's about the effort it takes to learn piano well. Any normal person in this room can do it, and it takes about that kind of discipline. I don't think you have to be like a concert pianist, okay? Just a pretty good pianist. But to think you could see emptiness with less effort than that is foolish. It doesn't happen. You'd have to be.... or like to be a serious dancer. The amount of effort it takes, you'd have to... definitely two things would have to happen. You'd have to find a really good teacher who could dance already, and secondly, you'd have to be on the bar a couple of hours every day. There's no way to get out of it. You have to. And the same with scales. I used to play sitar. For years we would go into the room and the guru would say, go in the corner and play this scale for an hour. And you'd say, no, no, I want to play like Ravi Shankar. And he'd say, no, no, he got there this way. And you'd have to play scales for hours. And it's the same thing. You have to put in the time. It's very similar to learning to play a musical instrument or learning a sport well, or something like that.

Then step number two, path number two, is called {jor lam}, the path of preparation, preparing to see emptiness directly. During that time you're going through four levels of increasingly sophisticated intellectual understanding of emptiness. So the idea that you can see emptiness just because you had a good breakfast, and you fall a certain way on the ground and your head...something like that is foolish, it's impossible. The Buddha never said that anywhere, to see emptiness you must go through directly to stage number two, which is a lot of intellectual study of emptiness, and along with that, contemplation. We'll talk about that. In our context here, it would be the equivalent of me standing up there and explaining the different kinds of emptiness and writing the Tibetan on the board and talking. That would be what we call {tu jung gyi}, {tu jung gyisherab} which means wisdom which comes from learning. And then, when I held up the pen and I said, okay, think about it, try to see it that way, that's called {tujung gyi sherab}, contemplative wisdom, the wisdom that comes from contemplation. So you have to go through those stages.

Stage number two, spiritual level number two, is where you're getting very sophisticated in your understanding of emptiness through learning, hearing about it from a person who knows about it, and the chances of learning emptiness from someone who doesn't have a close experience with it is like trying to learn concert piano from someone who knows how to play Chopsticks. [laughter] The odds are about like that. Maybe somebody did it, but it's unlikely. By the way, is it impossible that at age 12 you have this insight into emptiness without meeting a teacher? Of course. The scriptures say yes, possible. Right after that it always says, because in 5 million lifetimes you studied with somebody and it just happens to be you don't have a teacher in this lifetime. So it's not impossible, it's just totally unlikely.

Then you get to the third level, which is to see emptiness directly, and that's really what I want to talk about. When I talked about getting to some level that you knew you were there, and you could say, okay, after a billion lifetimes I know where I am, I'm on level three. And I have seven lifetimes to go, six, definite, nothing more than that, I'm out of here in seven lifetimes, I've seen it. Okay?

That would be so comforting, to reach that level, to know directly that you're going to get enlightened and to see directly your own enlightenment. That's what we see, that's what your heart wants, you want some kind of confirmation that you're at a certain level. You get that by doing Mahamudra emptiness meditation. That's what I'm saying, that's why I brought it up. The only real measure of where you are, as you can feel from the description of the five paths, is how good you're doing with emptiness meditation. Did you get it or not? And then you are at some kind of incontrovertible level, and a level that doesn't go back. Once you reach {tong lam}, the path of seeing, the direct perception of emptiness, you never go back, you're changed forever, you're an arya, arya means "changed forever person". And you're a {gyun shuk}, you're a stream-enterer. So you can do it in this lifetime.

During this meditation, what we're about to meditate on, get your motivation up, think that you could reach a level in this lifetime so you know where you are, and are not susceptible to dharma rumors, like maybe I'm on level six, I kind of liked somebody yesterday that I didn't like usually or something like that. [laughter] And then the next day you get angry at your lama and then you're confused: what level am I on? Did I get anywhere or not? Ten years later, am I any better or not? I don't know. You don't have to live like that. Study Mahamudra, get to the point of seeing emptiness directly and you cannot go back. {pang ja} means you eliminate certain mental afflictions forever. Three, in fact. And then you get to a point where you know exactly where you're at. That would be so nice, in this lifetime, to get to a point where you knew where you were. So you can do that. It's about as difficult as learning the piano well. And if you don't put the time in and you don't... you know, people come to me all the time with these confessions: I'm not meditating everyday. Then you're just killing yourself. You're murdering yourself. It's not like Lama Zopa's going to be mad at you. It's not the point. You're literally making very clear efforts to murder yourself. And you'll die like that. It's not for anybody else. It's to see emptiness. You have to. You have to meditate an hour a day of good meditation, which means an hour and a half of time, because 15 minutes on each side is getting settled and doing your preliminaries. To think you're going to learn piano without practicing is something that fifth graders do. [laughs] They try to convince their mom that they don't have to go for piano lessons and they'll still be okay. It's a child's way of thinking. It's impossible.

So anyway, we'll do an emptiness meditation, we'll do a Mahamudra meditation. So get settled. I'll go through all the preliminaries. We'll go through about 45 minutes of meditation, so put away your books, get totally settled in your normal meditation posture. Good meditations are a little delicate, okay? Try not to cough, sneeze, snort, move. If you've gotta stick your legs out, do it now. If you want to bunch your legs up, do it now. It will be about 45 minutes. So if you're not used to sitting, then spread out, put your legs up, it doesn't matter. But once you take your position, just out of respect for the other people, don't move. If you have to sneeze, hold it really hard and see if you can make it a splurt instead of an explosion. And then forget everything else for 45 minutes. First step is to watch your breath. Put your mind at the opening of your nose, watch your breath. I personally find it very useful to get to the part where I can hear the blood in my ears, or the air hitting my eardrums, and that automatically takes your breath down to where you want it.

[pause]

Next step is to take refuge. Take refuge in whatever understanding of emptiness you have now. The texts all say to think about one thing you know about emptiness now and take refuge in it.

[pause]

Secondly, think about bodhichitta. It's good at this point to try to think of someone who's actually having a problem, like depression or anxiety or a bad physical problem and think about them. Something specific.

[pause]

Third step is to invite your root lama, or, if you don't have a root lama, some other Holy Being to come and meditate before you. Try and picture their face clearly.

[pause]

Next step is to bow down to them mentally. So think of some holy quality they have, something you can recognize now, and mentally bow to it.

[pause]

Then, in your mind, make them offerings, something really beautiful. The classic offering is Samantrabhadrā's offering cloud, to fill the whole sky with flowers, roses, sweet-smelling roses, lotuses, any kind of flowers you like. Maya has some nice roses. A more advanced form of offering is to offer them something about your practice, something that you've been doing right, or something that you will do right today.

[pause]

Next step is to think of some sort of negative thing you've done, or thought or said to someone in the last day or two and purify your mind of it by playing it back clearly in your mind like a video tape recorder. Play it back over and over again. Look at it, see how dumb it was.

[pause]

Then do the same for something good you did, something good you said. Normally Americans—I guess it's our religious or cultural background—are not good at admitting what we're doing good and right. So rejoice in something you're doing. Clearly picture something you've done well. Some progress you've made. Something specific like something you did for someone, something kind you said to someone, some improvement in your thoughts. Play it back a few times and enjoy it.

[pause]

And lastly, ask the Great Lamas to stay in this world and also your good dharma friends, the ones you sense are practicing well and who challenge you to practice well.

[pause]

That's the end of the preliminaries. It's really important to do them before you meditate, always before you meditate. This is also a good place to shift if you have to move around, okay? So it's a like a 30 second chance to move your legs. Blow your nose if you have to. After this point, if your nose starts running, just forget it, just let it run. [laughter] Seriously. Put a towel in your lap or something. If you get an itch, just ignore it. Itches are kind of cool. They kind of peak out, and then they fade away, if you don't scratch them. Okay, go back to your breath. We'll do about three rounds of ten.

Now try to visualize or think about your favorite physical object. Something you own that you like the most. For me it's my laptop. But try to imagine, go through your life, see what automatically and comfortably comes to your mind as your favorite thing that you own. Maybe it's a piece of clothing, maybe it's a piece of jewelry, maybe it's a car. Something that you own, a physical object that you enjoy the most.

[pause]

Look at that object and examine your feelings about it, check your filter, those rose-colored glasses, your world-view about it, that you think it has some sort of lasting quality, that it's going to last for a while. How to judge whether or not you're thinking about it correctly is to consider how disappointed would you be if it were lost or broken or stolen by someone. How strongly do you feel that this object is going to last?

[pause]

Now try to concentrate on the same object, but cancel its self-existence. In this case it would be try to see it as something which is not going to last and which has no permanence, something which is passing through your life rather quickly, and changing constantly as it goes and will very quickly, very soon, be out of your life. Try to look at it that way and try to see it that way. Strip away your natural feeling that it's going to last for a while.

[pause]

Again focus on that favorite object that you own and don't think anything about it, just focus on it.

[pause]

Now try to get in touch or in tune with your feelings that you own it and what that implies, that you have control over it, you decide where it goes, no one else can come and move it or take it or do anything to it, it's yours. Try to focus on your feeling of what it means for it to be yours, and how you look at it that way.

That's your world-view about that object, that's the color of the glasses you have on when you look at that object. Maybe it's a different color than the first color. "I own this thing", which means I control where it goes and what happens to it.

[pause]

Now try to strip away that way of thinking, see how wrong it is. That's a {gakja}. {gakja} means self-existent object, non-existent, never did exist, never will exist, you don't own that thing, you cannot control it's destiny any more than anyone else can. Try to look at that object in a new way. Cancel that old thought about it. Then try to see it as something that... where it goes, or what happens to it is under the control of other factors, not you, really.

[pause]

And that's a meditation you can do. By the end of this weekend, you'll have a whole Mahamudra meditation in your repertoire and you can pull it out whenever you want. And you should have a lot of other meditations in your tool box, like death meditation, or lam rim meditation, or tonglen meditation, or something like guru yoga meditation. Now ask that lama to come to the top of your head. They should get smaller, because they'd be too heavy otherwise. So they get like 3" high and as they come up to the top of your head, they turn around so they're facing the same way you are.
[pause]

Then you ask them to come down into your heart and they follow a very straight line, like an elevator shaft, down... don't picture it at your throat, picture it behind your throat, more towards your backbone, a little bit less than half-an-inch in front of your backbone. They're coming down a small shaft there. They get smaller and smaller till they could fit into a pea. They come down slowly, try to feel it, as if it's actually happening. When they get to the level of your heart, stop them there.

[pause]

This is a meditation trick where they're staying in a little capsule the size of a pea, but when you put your mind inside the pea, it looks like a huge, beautiful room, full of golden light, huge lotus flower, beautiful cushion on top of the lotus flower made of white light, and then your Lama sitting on that. But when you take your mind out again, it's only the size of a pea.

[pause]

Then you dedicate the good karma, which is the last of the preliminaries. Think about golden light coming out of the Lama's heart, then it's coming out of your heart, then I like to think of it spreading to all the people in SoCal, Santa Cruz. If you're strong enough, send some up to San Francisco, and feel that every person it touches it helps them, with whatever problem they're having today it helps them.

[pause]

Then normally we do a dedication verse at the end. {_____ la}, will you do it? Then we'll take a small break, like a 5-10 minute break.

{Dedication Verse}

Okay, take a break, walk around. We'll start at about 10 after 11.

[pause]

I'm thinking two flavors of emptiness a session is pretty good speed. So we're going to do two more. Maybe one more. No, we'll do two more. These two flavors are a little hard. Okay, it's going to get harder now. First one was easy, right? The first flavor of emptiness that we talked about—which is not really emptiness, get used to that, is just a useful pseudo-emptiness, and that's all Lord Buddha meant—is addressing your feeling that things are permanent. It's addressing your feeling that something is going to last. It's definitely a step to emptiness, which is why Lord Buddha taught it. Definitely. It's like the first rung on a ladder with six big steps on it. It's a beautiful thing to know. But don't go around saying that Michael Roach said that was emptiness, okay? I call it a flavor of emptiness, meaning that it's useful. It's not what will get you out of samsara by itself. Number six is the only one that has that power. It is not the one that will get you out of your suffering by itself. It's very useful. It's a good first one, but it's not the one that removes samsara.

The second flavor of emptiness addresses your feeling about owning things, that you could own something. Someone told me something interesting. I was saying, you don't know if you're going to have your shirt.. everybody still got their shirt? [laughs] Somebody had one stolen out of a car after I gave a lecture like that. I said you don't even own your body, your arm, not even your name... and somebody told me that they were in Tibet a few months ago. One guy was reading a Dharma book, he had his arm out the window of the car, and a truck came by and his arm was gone. Just like that. And they were running around trying to find blood for him and airlifting him out. You don't know that you'll have this arm tomorrow. You have to get used to that. Somebody said "reasonable expectation", but karma's very unreasonable. Is it reasonable to believe that I'll be sitting here tomorrow? I don't know, I guess you could say it's reasonable, but there are certain odds that I'll not be sitting anywhere, know what I mean? That I can't even come here. So "reasonable" is a little touchy. Odds, statistics, karma ignores them. [laughs] You might be the only one that doesn't come tomorrow and the odds of that are a 100% if you have the karma. See what I mean?

So here we go to number three. Number three's a little tricky. The people who popularize this flavor of emptiness are the Mind-Only School. I'm not going to get into why "Mind-Only" is a bad name for that school, because they don't believe everything is only in the mind at all. But that's another subject. I don't want to confuse this class with another class. We're just going to talk about two ideas they have about emptiness. So that's three and four. So you're going to get two doses of Mind-Only School, which is a tough school, this morning. I don't know... yeah, we'll do it anyway.

[laughter]

Okay, number three. The words are long but the meaning is not so bad. Say {suk} [repeat] {dang} [repeat] {suk dzin} [repeat] {gyi} [repeat] {tsema} [repeat] {dze-shen gyi} [repeat] {tongwa} [repeat]. One more time. {sak dang} [repeat] {suk dzin gyi} [repeat] {tsema} [repeat] {dze-shen gyi} [repeat] {tongwa} [repeat]. Okay. According to the Mind-Only School, this is the main kind of emptiness, the main thing. {suk} means something visible that you can see. {suk} has two meanings in Buddhism. One is your physical body in the five heaps or the five {skandhas}. That's not the one we're talking about. In this case, we're talking about visible objects, something you can see. Colors and shapes. Colors and shapes. {dang} means "and", {suk dang suk-dzin gyitsema}, the {tsema} part is {pramana}, meaning a valid perception, a valid perception.

Are you having a valid perception when you see a pen here? Yes you are. How many valid perceptions do you have a day? (Geshe Michael snaps his fingers.) Sixty-five times that, meaning that sixty-five of those multiplied by the number of those in your day. How many non-{tsemas} or non-{pramanas} do you have during the day? A certain number, but they're pretty unusual. It's like a leaf going in front of the car which you think is a squirrel. For one split second you have a non-{tsema}, a non-{pramana}. Then you move the car and see it's only a leaf, and suddenly the nonvalid perception is replaced by a valid perception. It's that quick. It's instantaneous. It just twists like that. So non-{pramanas} are pretty rare. We're just talking about a normal perception of a pen, the colors and shapes of a pen.

{suk dang suk-dzin gyi tsema} means the perception which is holding that pen. Meaning your visual consciousness. Your awareness of the colors and shapes of the pen. So what do we have so far? The colors and shapes of the pen, or the pen, and my perception of the pen, my mind sitting here seeing the pen. Two things so far. The pen and my mind seeing the pen, being aware of the pen through the assistance of my eyeball, my optic nerve.

So basically, you can narrow it down to this: me and the pen. Me seeing the pen. Me seeing, and the pen being seen. The two of us. {dze-shen} literally means "separate substance". That's a code word in the Mind-Only School for comes from a different karmic seed. Comes from a different karma. Like that pen just happened to make it over there, and I just happened to make it over here. We are coming from separate places. {dze-shen} means "we are coming from separate places". That pen was made in, let's see, Bellwood, Illinois. The poor thing had to get all the way out to California and it has its history, it used to be just a little prehistoric tree, then that fell into the mud, and a couple of million years went by, it turned into oil in Saudi Arabia, they pumped it out, it got to Illinois, they made it into this pen and it got here. And then me, I was born in LA, and then I went to the East Coast, and then I made it here too. And then just by some kind of coincidence, he by his circuitous route, and me by mine, have come to be in this room together. That's {dze shen gyi tongwa}. Just by some kind of random thing. {dze-shen gyi tongwa} means separate incidents have brought my eye and my consciousness, my mind and Michael Roach to stand here and brought this pen here also. Separate forces. No connection.

Is that true in the Mind-Only School? Absolutely not! So they even go so far as to say that emptiness means that that's not true. Emptiness is the lack of truth to that. {tongwa}. {tongwa} means "emptiness." Don't forget that emptiness just means to cancel something, deny something. It doesn't mean like an empty stomach, like I have right now.

It's not like that. {tongwa} means that it's not true. That's all. Emptiness here means "it's not true." What's not true? That this pen just wandered into this room, through its own history, and that I just happened to be here. In other words, you could summarize this kind of emptiness by saying there aren't any accidents.

There's no such things as randomness. This pen was forced into this room by karma, and I was forced into this room by karma. How many karmas? Mind-Only School says a shared karma. It's very interesting. {dze-chik} means... {dze-shen gyi tongwa} means it wasn't just two separate events going on. This whole thing, me meeting this pen, was produced by one karmic force. That's the whole point of the Mind-Only School. That's their idea of emptiness. You want to understand emptiness in the Mind-Only School? Get it—there's no accidents. This pen was brought here by certain karmic energies, I was brought here by certain karmic energies, and they're the same. There are no accidents. Nothing you ever meet in your life is random. Nothing that's ever bad... and particularly, this is important in the study of the things that you don't like. Okay?

When something good happens, you don't investigate, why did this happen to me, you don't go home and stay awake at night and try to figure out why did this happen to me. You think it's God-given. But when something bad happens, you get cancer, you lose your job, you break up a relationship, you sit up at night and wonder why this happened to you. And the Mind-Only School says, you can stop that now, that flavor of mental affliction.

Did you notice that every flavor of emptiness has its own flavor of mental affliction? The first one works on that feeling that things are going to last. The second one works on that feeling that: I own these things. Now the third one works on that feeling of: why do things happen to me? I didn't deserve that? Why did I lose that person? Why did I get cancer? So the third kind of emptiness is aimed at stopping mental afflictions, like getting angry or upset or feeling bad, especially about the bad events in your life. Like now you can deal with it. It's coming from karma, the same karma that brought you here brought it here. That's all. That's all. No more accidents. Don't see the world as being random any more. I always say this.

Master Shantideva, in the Bodhichavatara, says, look, there's only three possibilities of why this crap is happening to you. What are they? Number one, it's random, big bang theory. Suddenly something went off a zillion years ago over near Pluto. Pluto wasn't here yet, but for some reason, something started. Out of nowhere. Then atoms and molecules started flying around space. And then by some accident, they've all collected together and you have a body and a mind now. That's theory number one of why your boss is so bad to you. Okay? Really. Number two is that there's a divine being, a creator god, who's sadistic, who says, hey, Michael Roach, meet [Asser Azelan??], your boss, and let's see how it goes. [laughter] And they're just hurting you. And Master Shantideva says that's possibility number two. Possibility number three is that there is some sense to why things happen. You hurt someone before, you were a bad manager or a bad supervisor to a bunch of people, you tortured your employees for a long time, and that's why you're meeting this guy. There's a justice, there's a karmic, cosmic justice to things, and that's why this is happening to you. There are no accidents. Master Shantideva basically boils it down to those three.

So if you understand emptiness flavor number three, which is not real emptiness, but we're getting closer, aren't we? We're getting closer, and that's the whole point. That's the point of the four ancient schools of Buddhism. I'm not talking Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, Gelupa. I'm talking Abhidharma School's Vaibashika, Sutra School's Sautantrika, then Mind-Only School, then Middle-Way School. The reason there's four schools is that there are more and more sophisticated explanations of emptiness. Now you're up to school number three. You're up to somebody saying, you want to stop your mental afflictions? Get it—there are no accidents. Whatever happens to you is coming from one force or energy that you set in motion before. So don't go blaming other people, don't go thinking bad things are happening to you at random, don't go blaming some god, okay? It's you. And nothing happens by accident. Nothing that you ever encounter, no object that you ever encounter is not coming from some karma that you set in motion yourself. So get used to it.

Does that help deal with your mental afflictions? Yes. Is it the one thing that can remove your mental afflictions forever? No. That's only number six. But this is very helpful. So we have three very helpful flavors of emptiness. That's why Lord Buddha taught them. That's why Lord Buddha made the Mind-Only School. So you've got that flavor of emptiness. There are no accidents. Nothing is random. And by the way, I'm not just talking about physical objects. I'm also talking about your thoughts. And that's preparing you for Mahamudra. Your thoughts ain't no accident either. No such thing as a random thought. No such thing as a random emotion. No such thing as a random bout of depression or anxiety. It all has its karmic causes. No such thing as something just happening in your life that you didn't set in motion. And that's what they're saying here. If you want to translate it, it would be something like the fact that things are void of... subject and object are void of coming from separate karma. Which is a fancy way of saying there ain't no accidents. Everything—you and the things you experience, are produced by one karmic event in the past. Get used to it. And that's another flavor of emptiness.

Don't forget that emptiness is always denying some non-existent, crazy, stupid thing that we strongly believe in. A typical example of that would be the lack of a 40 foot, two-headed purple elephant rampaging through this temple at this moment. That's one kind of emptiness. And you think in your mind, that's a silly example. It ain't. Why? Because the self-existent thing you're grasping on to that causes all your suffering has exactly the same ontological status as a two-headed purple elephant that's rampaging, crushing Kendall, we won't have any {umdz} tomorrow. [laughter] The self-existent thing that you strongly believe in, which causes all your suffering, has exactly the same amount of existence as that elephant. Get used to it. Emptiness is denying something that never existed, never could exist, never will exist, but that you in your heart strongly feel exists.

What do we have so far? Things that last. They don't exist. Things that you own. They don't exist. Bosses that bother you and just came out of nowhere and you had nothing to do with bringing them to you. That doesn't exist. You see? You get used to it. Emptiness is always the denial of a {gakja}, {gakja} meaning "non-existent, self-existent thing". Exactly the same as a rabbit with horns and stuff like that. They just don't exist. But your emotion about them causes you all your suffering.

Okay, emptiness number four.

[student: What's {suk} in Sanskrit?]

{suk} in Sanskrit is {rupa}. It has two meanings. One meaning is the first of the five heaps, meaning your physical body. But on a deeper, on another level, it means the object of eye consciousness. {suk} equals shapes plus color. You can think of it that way.

[student: [unclear] means things come from different places?]

Right.

[student: What about the middle part?]

Oh, {suk dzin gyi tesma} means the state of mind which is grasping onto the colors and shapes, meaning your visual consciousness. You can boil it down to this—you seeing the pen, and the pen, you and the pen, have not come from separate places. They've been produced by one karmic event in the past. The Mind-Only School is all hot on that. That's their big thing. And that's ultimately what Mind-Only means. Get used to that. It doesn't mean that that pen is part of my mind. It just means that we both come from the same karmic place. There is no school of Buddhism that says the pen is part of your mind. It's a sexy thought and people explain it that way but the Buddha never taught it that way.

Number four. This is a long one. Let me see if I can get it any shorter. No. You'll get this whole thing, okay? Sorry, that's the longest one. Okay, here we go. It's long and it's not that hard. {rang nyi} means "itself". Then you have {rang nyi chepe} which means "called itself". Something is called what it is. The fact that something is called what it is. {tanye} means "a name" or a word, an expression. {jukpa} means to apply an expression, apply a word or a name to something. {jukshi} means the thing that got the name. Like this cylinder is the {jukshi} to which I {juk} the name "pen". This cylinder is the object towards which I apply the name "pen". This is the {jukshi}, "pen" is the name, is the {tanye}, and then I {juk} it to the cylinder. So {jukpa} means "to apply", {tanye} means "the name" and {jukshi} is the thing I give the name to, the cylinder. {yinpa}, the fact that it is. What? The fact that this cylinder is the thing I call the pen. The fact that something gets called something, okay? Then you can take this whole thing in one big splash. {rang gi tsennyi kyi druppa} {rang gi tsennyi kyi druppa} {rang gi tsennyi kyi druppa} exists by definition, from its own side, automatically. {rang gi tsennyi kyi druppa} means "automatically." From its own side. And it's very simple, okay?

Who decides this should be called a pen? We do. It's convention. That's all. We just all agree. What should we call this cylinder thing that he writes up on the board with? Let's call it a "pen". If you're Russian, "fero", if you're Tibetan, {yigma}, different things. Let's call it a pen. But get used to the idea that if you've studied Mind-Only, those of you who've studied Mind-Only, it's a {kuntak}, it's something you've made up in your mind, but human nature is to think that it's natural. Human nature is to think that the labels I have given things belong to them by their godgiven right. And you forget that it was you who labeled it "pen." The human tendency is to get very upset if anyone else thinks of it any other way. Okay?

Actually, you made this up, your culture made this up, you made up this word, we decided to think of this as a pen, we decided to call it pen. This is not something which is its almighty godgiven right. You have to remember that this is a construct, this is something we've made up. But the human tendency, human nature, which leads to mental affliction, is to say: my mom called that a pen, so it has to be a pen. And these are the suppositions of your culture, that my mum and dad called that a pen, and everybody else better call that a pen. My mum and dad and Mrs. Melvin in the first grade said democracy is right for everybody. So everybody should live that way because that's what they told me. That's not something which is natural, that's not something which is automatic, this is a construct, this is something that your parents and Mrs. Melvin made up or their parents told them. But this is a construct of your culture. It may not be true for everybody.

Interpretation of things, how you interpret the things around you, how you judge them, how you decide whether they're good or bad, is a construct. That's something that your culture is making up. Get used to it. Whether you experience this thing as the most beautiful thing in the world, or whether you experience it as something ugly is something made up, is a construct. This pen is not naturally good from its own side, and this pen is not naturally bad from its own side. Get used to it.

You can say that emptiness number four is very helpful in the case of judging things. Judging other people. Do you really have the equipment to say that the person next to you is the way that you're thinking about them right now? Can you read their minds? Can you really tell what the people around you are? Lord Buddha is slowly stripping away the justifications for most of your mental afflictions. Stop thinking of things as lasting forever. Stop thinking that you can own something. What was the last one? Stop thinking that accidents can happen. They can't. Now, stop thinking that your judgments of things are god-given, has-to-be-that-way, because that's also just a result of your karma, the way you see something.

By the way, if people understood this kind of emptiness, they'd stop having fights about favorite songs. Okay? We talked about it in San Francisco. There'd be no more people saying Neil Young is the best musician. Has to be! I don't know why you changed the channel! You don't understand! And what the Mind-Only School is saying, {rang gi tsenneyi kyi druppa tongwa}, means it's empty, devoid of having any nature of being the best song from its own side. It doesn't have that quality. By the way... well I'm not going to get to that, let's rub this in a little bit. So, favorite song, favorite actresses, favorite movie, favorite anything, favorite people, people you like, people you don't like... your judgment of other people... Mind-Only School says please don't forget it's a construct. You could just as well have twisted it around a different way and you would love this person. Probably you will a year from now. And then you'll think, that's a god-given thing. See what I mean?

So get used to realizing that your judgments, especially of other people, are something that you are constructing, that your mind is constructing. {rang gi tsenneyi kyi ma druppa} means "not existing by definition" is a Mind-Only School code word for "it doesn't come from its own side that way." You are putting this trip on it. You are labeling it, you are imputing it, you are making it that way. That's your problem. So don't go blaming other people when they don't think about it that way. Don't judge things, and then get into conflict. I think emptiness number four is very good for preventing conflict, okay?

Obviously, two different people are always going to make different constructs, or interpret things in different ways, they're going to have different judgments about things. Realize that it's not coming from the object's side, it's coming from your side, you're laying this trip on every object around you. So don't get upset when that's in conflict with someone else's trip. Then you've just eliminated another 25% of your mental afflictions. So it's a very useful idea. It's pretty cool.

Mind-Only School is very very attractive as far as removing your mental afflictions. Your interpretation of things is your construct. Don't forget it. That's {kuntak} in Mind-Only School. What are the other two groups in the Mind-Only School? {shenwangng yongdrup}. {shenwangng} means all the changing things in the world. {yongdrup} means the emptiness of everything in the world. Are there constructs in the Mind-Only School? No way. In the Mind-Only School, those things from their own side. This is a pen from its own side. The pen-ness comes from its own side, whatever you call it, how you judge it, is different. Got it? You could put it this way. There is a pen there. Whether it's a good pen or a bad pen, it's a construct. But in the Mind-Only School, is there a pen there? Yes. From it's own side, through it's own unique way of being. {rang gi tsennyi kyi druppa}. From its own side, in its own... my judgment about it, good pen, bad pen, is a mental construct. Realize that and stop fighting with other people about: oh, I like this, you have to like things the way I like them, you have to not like the things I don't like. Stop that. It's a big source of mental afflictions.

That's (A). (B): but does the Mind-Only School think there's a pen out there? Yes. And that it comes from its own side, and that it has it's own unique way of being. I'm setting you up for number six. Do you feel it? Lord Buddha is setting you up. Number three and number four are very cool ways of looking at reality but they have a major flaw. What is it? It's still founded on the idea that thing is coming from it's own side. Which is still short of the ultimate emptiness. Me, who comes from my own side, and the pen, that comes from its own side, me, who exist inherently from my own side, and the pen, which inherently exists from its own side, have come from the same karmic seed. This is Mind-Only School. And me, who exists inherently, have judgment about this pen, which exists inherently, which then exists inherently, okay? That's where they're at. The pen is really there, from its own side, exists from its own side, there is a pen there. Whether or not I think about it, whether or not I'm aware of it. If a tree fell in the forest, the sound would be there. And I am over here, and it's over there. But whether I think good or bad about it, now that's a construct, that I'm making up. Got it?

This is Mind-Only School. They're like people on the fence. Like they don't want to go with the Abhidharma School that says everything comes from its own side. And they're very afraid of the Middle-Way School that says nothing comes from its own side, like I'm not going over there, you guys are extremists. They say that. You Middle-Way people, you are crazy. Going around saying nothing exists. Did Middle-Way School say that? No. But Mind-Only accuses them bitterly. [laughter] You guys are crazy! We're not going over there. It's true that my judgments are something that I make up and they have no existence from their own side. {rang gi tsennyi kyi ma druppa}. But the pen, come on, I mean, there's a pen there, you can't say there's no pen there. That's too extreme. They get very nervous around that. All right?

So the emptiness we have so far, which we'll practice next session, is thinking there could be accidents, that you haven't set in motion the forces that created the pen and that you, who, by the way, also exist from your own side, from this point of view, from this school. Secondly, that your judgments of the pen, such as good pen, I like this pen, bad pen, I don't like this pen, are fixed, and that everyone else should think that way, and when you don't think that way, you're a bad person—that that's not true. That's the fourth kind of emptiness. Very useful kinds of emptiness. And we're getting close, we're getting hot. Next session we'll move into the Middle-Way schools. Number five belongs to the Lower Middle-Way School, number six belongs to the Higher Middle-Way School.

You've got to get a homework. I say they're good. [laughs] [laughter]. Okay? And that exists by definition. [laughter] And no one can disagree. So try to do it, okay? It helps a lot, really. Then next time, when you have to explain it to somebody, you're not fumbling around, like I don't quite remember or.... You are the next lineage holder, right? I always say, you shouldn't be the one who did the dead end after two-and-a-half thousand years. [laughter] They'll get the lineage. Khen Rinpoche, Geshe Lobsang Tharchin, Michael Roach, and then... and then, oh, it dead-ended. [laughs] [laughter] Shouldn't be like that. You have to... once you hear any teaching, you're automatically responsible to pass it on and not to be the place where it stopped after two-and-a-half thousand years. All right.

Okay, we'll do a dedication.

[Dedication]

Saturday Afternoon Session

[Prayer]

So we'll start a meditation. Are you still full of lunch, shall we do class first?

[students: Yeah.]

Me too. Okay. [laughs] We'll do a class first. Give it some time to go down.

Say {gakja} [repeat] {gakja} [repeat]. There are certain words that Westerners remember easily, like {bakjak}, or {le lo}. {gakja} is one of them. {gakja} means the thing that emptiness is empty off. The thing that doesn't exist. Emptiness means that something doesn't exist. It should have been called blankness, or voidness or absence of something. You can just call it the absence of something. The absence of something that never did exist, never will exist, doesn't exist now, but which, because you believe in it, causes you all your trouble. So that's a {gakja}. In the first flavor of emptiness, what was the {gakja}? Basic thing?

[student: Permanence.]

Yeah, something that's going to last forever. Now some things do, like empty space or emptiness itself, that's different, we're talking about your dog or your car, your house or your boyfriend, okay? A boyfriend who could last forever. A car that would never break down. Stuff like that. A job that would go on forever without any problems. Stuff like that. Your body being healthy all the time. Those are {gakjas}. They don't exist. And the first emptiness was emptiness of those things. They don't exist, you thought they existed. So the first one was understanding impermanence. Second one? Second flavor of emptiness?

[student: Owning things.]

Ownership. The idea that you could own something. Specifically in the teachings on emptiness, it refers to the fact that you think you own your body and mind, like you control them, like you think you're not going to get sick, like you think you can stop having a mental affliction two hours from now, [laughs], like you think you could control it, really... that's a wrong idea. You really can't control mental afflictions either. Now does that mean you can't reach nirvana? We've got to talk about it, okay? But definitely, it's obvious you can't control your body. You can't tell if you're going to be healthy next week or not. That's a lie. And you obviously can't control your possessions or you'd never have problems with other people about your possessions. So that's the lie of ownership. Third one? Hmm?

[student: No accidents.]

Yeah, no accidents, no accidents. The things around you are caused by certain karmic causes that also brought you to this place. If you don't like your boss at work, there's only two problems—you made him, and you made you. [laughs] You put him there, and you put you there. Okay? No accidents.

[student: Does that mean that things come from the same cause, that things come from the same karmic seed....]

Technically that's what the meaning of it is. It's that you and your boss are coming from the same karmic force which....

[student: [unclear]]

It doesn't mean they're inseparable at all. They're totally different. If you don't think so, hit your head with a brick and see if your boss goes out. [laughter] See what I mean? [laughs] No, they're separate. There's a big difference between {de pa de} and {ta de}. Big difference. They're still different. Non-duality is a big misconception, dharma rumor, a thousand different things, like somehow I'm supposed to think that I'm my boss, or I'm supposed to think I'm the chair, or somehow I could melt into the chair. Those of you who did the Diamond Cutter course, we discussed non-duality, it means two things. One, during the direct perception of emptiness, you cannot distinguish between subject and object, in other words, you can't separate yourself from the emptiness. Why? Very simple reason. It's not that you melt together. Because emptiness is an absence, or a negative thing, and you're a positive thing, so never the twain shall meet. They could never become the same thing, they're totally different. But there is a non-duality at that moment, which is what? You can't distinguish you from the emptiness. Why?

[student: Because you're in the direct perception of emptiness.]

Because you're in the direct perception of emptiness and you can only perceive ultimate reality. Now, between you and ultimate reality, one of them isn't ultimate reality. Which one? You! [laughs] Okay? So, if you could have a perception of you during the direct perception of ultimate emptiness, you would have to be emptiness, and you're not. So therefore there's a kind of non-duality there, meaning you can't distinguish between yourself and the object. That's the basic meaning of non-duality.

Another meaning of non-duality is that things appear to be self-existent but they're not. And at some point, when you see emptiness directly, the appearance and the reality are the same. There's a non-duality there. There's a concordance between the appearance and the reality. That's the only time in the history of your brain when things match what you think they are. And there's a non-duality there. Something like that. But the idea that you somehow melt into emptiness or you become the object, or thinking that you're separate from the thing you're looking at is wrong. Of course you're separate, you are separate. Does that mean you come from separate seeds? No. You don't come from separate seeds. You are devoid of coming from separate seeds, and that's emptiness according to the Mind-Only School.

[student: [unclear]]

But there's no inherent anything. See what I mean? There's no inherent separateness, and there's no inherent one-ness. This pen is not itself inherently, and this pen is not you inherently. So that applies to everything. Okay, number four?

[student: That a thing comes its own side?]

Didn't get there yet. It's coming.

[student: [unclear]]

It's like judgments. It's a statement about judgments. Judgments are constructs. Judgments are our creations and don't forget that. Judgments are void of not being creations. That's what number four is. Labeling things. What you call things doesn't come from their side, it comes from your side. That's all. If you decide this pen is good, or you decide this pen is bad, that's not coming from the pen's side, that's coming from your side. Value judgments are made from your side. That should eliminate a lot of mental afflictions.

C.S. Lewis wrote a beautiful thing about the fish knife. You're six years old and you go to your friend's house and they have a fish knife and they call it a fish knife, but it doesn't quite look like what your parent's fish knife looks like, so you have this debate with your childhood friend. You say, that's not a fish knife. And he says, yes, that's a fish knife. And you say, no it's not, it's not what we call a fish knife in my family. In our house we have a fish knife and it doesn't look like that. And then he goes through this thing of explaining to you that this is also a fish knife, this is what we call a fish knife in our house even though it doesn't quite look like a fish knife in your house. And then you learn, at a certain age, that what one person might label something is not what you might label it.

How does this apply to your mental afflictions? Favorite songs, what you and I should do this afternoon, which movie we should go to... things like that. How should we spend our time? I want to do this, you want to do this. No, no, you don't understand, this is better! Know what I mean? But "this is better" is a construct. The Mind-Only School is saying that that's something you have created in your mind, and to you it's better, but that doesn't mean that to someone else it's better. And knowing this is very helpful to eliminate mental afflictions and not judging other people. Okay? In the study of emptiness itself, which one is better? Which one is best of the six?

[student: Number six.(?)]

Bad answer. [laughter] It's the one that helps the particular person at their level. Otherwise the Buddha wouldn't have turned the First Turning of The Wheel and the Third Turning of the Wheel. There would have been just one Turning of the Wheel, which is the second, where he taught number six. That's all. Which is better? Whichever one fits that person at that time. Which one is correct? Number six. [laughter] [laughs] It's the difference between valid and correct and that's a big thing in Buddhism.

Okay, we're up to number five. Emptiness flavor number five. Ready? Say {lo} [repeat] {nume la} [repeat] {nangway} [repeat] {wang gi} [repeat] {shaktsam} [repeat] {mayimpar}[repeat] {yu} [repeat] {rang gi} [repeat] {duluksu} [repeat] {druppay} [repeat] {tongwa} [repeat]. One more time. {lo nume la} [repeat] {nangway} [repeat] {wang gi} [repeat] {shaktsam} [repeat] {mayinpar}[repeat] {yu} [repeat] {rang gi} [repeat] {duluksu} [repeat] {druppay} [repeat] {tongwa} [repeat]. That's emptiness according to the lower half of the Middle-Way School, the Swatantrika, which doesn't have anything to do with Tantra. It has a different meaning here. It's an idea they have about certain logical terms. You can call Swatantrika the Independent School. They believe in a certain self-existence of the effectiveness of certain types of logic, so they're called Independent, the Independent School. I call them the Independent Group, within the Madhyamika School.

There are four schools, and in the fourth school, Madhyamika or Middle-Way, there are two groups, the lower group and the higher group. So we're up to the lower group of the Middle-Way School. They're called the Independent Group, Swatantrika, not to be confused with Sautrana, which is school number two. And Tibetan lamas pronounce them both the same way, so it can be really confusing, so you've got to know that. We'll go through each part of it, and then we'll talk about it.

{lo} means "mind", another word for mind, like "Lobsang" means "pure mind". {Nume} means "unaffected". "Unaffected" in the study of perception in Buddhism means {chu ke chu ge} [unclear]. {chu ke chu ge} means "unaffected by temporary circumstances." For example, you're not on LSD, you're not totally drunk, you're not overcome by jealousy, and you're not in a train that's moving a certain way that makes it look like the other train is moving. These are all called {chu ke chu ge}, meaning they can affect your perception in the short term.

So when we have this definition, and we're saying your mind is not screwed up at the time we're talking about it, it means it's not affected by other conditions right now, it's a normal state of mind, {lo nume} means "unaffected state of mind". You're not drunk, you're not crazy, you're not madly jealous so that the world looks different than it is. {lo nume}, a normal unaffected state of mind. {la}, to that state of mind, {nangway} means the object appears to your state of mind. You're having a plain old normal state of mind and this pen is appearing to it. {nangway} means the pen is appearing to your mind. {wang gi} means "by virtue of that", {shakpa} means "we can say it exists." We can say something exists solely by virtue of it appearing to a normal state of mind. "I think therefore I am." Something like that. The thing is there, it's appearing... there are two conditions: the pen is appearing to my mind, and my mind is seeing it. Then you can say something exists. This is a little bit more subtle than the Mind-Only School which says the pen is existing totally from its own side, through its own unique way of being, whether I'm there or not. It's the tree in the forest thing. What would a Mind-Only School person say? If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it, does the sound exist?

[student: Yes.]

They say yes. Now what would an Independent Group person of the Middle-Way School say? No, there has to be both, there has to be {lo kyi lay}, contributing from its side, and then there has to be the object appearing to the mind.

There have to be two conditions there to {shak}... {shak} means to say that this thing exists. To {jok} or to {shak}, to say that this object can be established as existing, requires the participation of two things: the object has to do its part. Thank you Mr. Object. Then your unaffected, unscrewed state of mind has to do its part: oh, there's a pen. So there has to be a pen appearing as a pen and there has to be a mind thinking of it as a pen. Then you can say a pen exists. {shakpa}, you can say it exists. {tsam} means that's all you need, you don't need anything else. It's not necessary that the object exists a 100% from its own side. It only has to be appearing as a pen in a way, and then 50% of it has to come from me and I think of it as a pen. {shaktsam}, that's all you need. Now what would a self-existent thing be like? What would a {gakja} be like? It would be the opposite.

[student: It wouldn't need a perceiver.]

Right. She said it wouldn't need a perceiver. It would be the opposite. {mayinpa} means, suppose you had a thing that wasn't that way. What way? Suppose you had a thing that wasn't something that required 50% your seeing it, and 50% it appearing a certain way? Then what would that be like? He's about to describe a {gakja}, a self-existent thing, the thing that emptiness says does not exist. He's about to describe that. What is it? You, you means the object, the thing, let's say a pen, okay? The pen. {rang gi duluksu} means "from its own side, through its own unique way of being, from its own side. Alone. {rang gi duluksu}, through some inherent identity that it has. {duluksu druppay rabten drup}.

Does such a thing exist according to the lower half of the Middle-Way School? Can the pen exist from its own side alone? No. You got to have somebody's mind looking at it and saying "pen". And then it says, don't I look like a pen? You say, "yes!" Then there's a pen, all right? There's got to be both. It's 50-50. And the Mind-Only School? They say it's just a pen from its own side, just a pen from its own side. Now it may have come from one karmic seed as me, but when we pop out from our same karmic seed, then we are separate, and it's existing from its side, and I'm existing from my side. Got it? Admitted we do come from the same karmic seed, admittedly, there are no accidents. But I am separate from the pen. It has its own existence from its own side, I have my own existence from my own side.

Now you get to the Independent Group, which is a little bit different. It's existing from its side, it's appearing as a pen and I'm thinking of it as a pen. And then there's a pen. They give an example, okay? They call it the example of the magic show. And there's this thing in India... if you've seen somebody do it, it's kind of cool. They take a stick, they call it a {dhiyu}, a specially shaped stick that looks like a magic marker, and they go like this, and then a bunch of people gathers around. In India, you see these little knots of people trying to see a magician do his thing, and kids are going underneath people's legs, it's really fun. And they usually have a {damaru} and they're making noise and having a kind of magic show. So they throw the stick on the ground, and they say a mantra, like some magic words, and then they have some fairy dust which they spray it, it's called {ngak itzay}. {ngak} means "mantra". We had it last night. {ngak luk}, tantra, mantra. So they say some magic words, then they sprinkle some magic dust in your eye. And then suddenly you see... the whole crowd backs off, because there's this big elephant there. People are running back and you're crushed, if you're in the back. You shout, what's wrong?

And they say, an elephant, an elephant, and really it's just magic. They have some kind of way... it's just magic. There's no real elephant there.

So how is that elephant appearing? Two things have to be there. What? There has to be stick. They need some kind of basis or foundation to do the magic, there has to be something to throw on the ground. And there has to be a thing that looks like an elephant.

Then the second thing, the people in the audience, their minds have to be buying into it, they have to be participating. Due to the mantra and the dust, they have to be in the mood to see something. It's like you give them LSD or something. But it has to be something that you're looking at. So this is very interesting. In the lower half of the Middle-Way School, there has to be a cylinder, appearing "pen-ly", a "penn-ish" cylinder, all right? It has to look "pen-ny". And then, from your mind, you have to be in the frame of mind or the mood, you have the karma to think "pen." And then there's a pen. Then you can use the pen, then there's a pen, then it works, okay? If either one of those was absent... what? If the magician didn't throw the stick down, meaning, if there was no cylinder, if nothing was appearing to your mind, you couldn't have a pen, on the one hand. On the other hand, they say in the scripture, suppose somebody comes later, after he's thrown the dust, and after he's said the magic words, and asks, what's going on, man? And they say, look, there's an elephant, he'd say, I just see a stick, because he didn't get the LSD or whatever in his head. He's just seeing the stick. That would be the example of trying to see a pen without having any karma to see a pen, without being able to cognize a pen.

So, in the Middle-Way, in the Independent Group, two things have to be there—the stick, and the magic stuff. Meaning, the cylinder, and your mind thinking of it as a pen. Two things have to be there. Without that, there cannot be a pen. There's certainly no pen existing from its own side like those lower schools thinks. Who's lower? Mind-Only, Sutrist and Abhidharma Schools. Those are the three lower. They all believe that it must have some existence from its own side, exclusively from its own side. And then the lower half of the Middle-Way School is wimpy, they can't go either way. They want to say nothing has any existence from its own side, but they don't want to say it exists from its own side, so they say, well, it half exists from its own side and then half of it's coming from you. When an object exists, half of it's coming from the object and half of it's coming from you. Is there a question?

[student: It seems to be that the lower schools say that both things have to exist, that they support each other in existing, the Mind-Only School says, then it's existing before it's existing, saying it has to be there existing before [?] the other thing in order to come into existence.]

Well, think of it this way: the Mind-Only School and the other two lower schools below it, which are Abhidharma Schools and the Sutrist Schools, the Logic Schools, they would all three of them say, yes, there's a pen there. Before you thought about it, before anything, there was a pen there, from its own side, exclusively from its own side. All it needs is to exist from its own side. There's a pen there. It doesn't depend on how you think of it at all.

If you were dumb, blind, an idiot, never heard of a pen, {da jang gi kyebu mayinba} means if you never heard of a pen.... say you're an Eskimo from the 13th century and you walked in and I'm holding this thing up, it would still be pen. Whether you could cognize it or not. Because it's a "pen". And then, the lower half of the Middle-Way School says, no, no, no, you have to be able to cognize it as a pen. It's not a pen for a twelfth century Eskimo who walks into this room.

[student: What is it for him?]

A cylinder. Just a black and white cylinder. Get that. So if you're Independent Group in the Middle-Way School, this is just a black and white cylinder until you think of it as a pen. But they would say it's appearing "pen-nish". It's suggesting "pen" to you, it's crying out, don't you think I could be a pen? [laughter] And you're saying, yes, you are! And then there's a pen, then you can use it, then there's a pen.

What kind of mental affliction would this address? We're starting to get into very cool levels of reality and thinking, and from here it gets sexier and sexier, so you've got to come tomorrow too. Lama Zopa wrote a wonderful book "Transforming Problems into Happiness." That's the level of practice this book is addressing. Like a problem happens to you, something bad happens, you get fired. A friend of mine got fired recently, he may be in this room. Most of my friends can't get fired because they're already unemployed. [laughter], [laughs] Okay, so you get fired. And that's like the pen. And then there's this perception of it. How do you take it? How are you going to take that? This is a lo-jong. You get into lo-jong, what they call mind-training, which is really how to develop a good heart, how to develop compassion. How could I see this thing in a way that's going to develop my personal practice? 50% of what's going on there is coming from your side. Whether this is going to be an opportunity or a disaster is up in the air.

Does a problem exist? I mean, what did Lama Zopa name his book? "Transforming Problems..." you see, when you say "problems", you're already assuming that there does exist a cylinder out there. Okay? He's not debating whether there are problems or not. He's saying, you've got a problem already. It already exists as a problem. Now can you look at it a different way and turn it into something else? See what I mean? By some kind of different thinking about it. And that's using a kind of emptiness. That's using the fifth flavor of emptiness. Is it real emptiness? No. Does it have its limitations? Obviously. Is it unhelpful or not useful? No, it's wonderful! It's fantastic, and you can, to a point, you could say, I'll use this as a practice. I got fired. This liberates me to go find a better paying job. Thank you! Like that. And you could try to think of it that way.

Now if you don't find a better paying job, and you find a worse one with a worse boss, it didn't exactly work. See what I mean? [laughter] [laughs] I mean, it's the idea that there is.. it's almost saying that the problem exists from its side, and then you're trying to think of it a certain way. And that's very Independent Madhyamika thinking. See what I mean? That very much fits their idea of emptiness. Whether or not this thing eventually turns out to be a godsend or a disaster is going to depend 50% on how you think of it. See what I mean? Okay, ostensibly a bad thing has happened. Now whether it turns out to be a real bad thing, or whether you can kind of push it towards being a good thing or an opportunity depends on you.

So 50% of reality is coming from the side of “The Problem”, and 50% of it is going to be transformed by you. So it’s “transformation”, okay? The fifth flavor of emptiness allows for transformation. Yeah?

[student: Isn’t being battered (?) with it already a construct of mind and therefore...]

Yes, it is. These kind of emptinesses don’t... they can overlap. Okay? Each one fits into the framework of the previous one, really. This is really just another version of... number four was it? Or three? Three. And when you get to number six, you’re going to see that it’s just a modification of all the other five. So they’re not like... in debate, they would say they’re not legally separated, they do overlap. But this is stressing the idea of taking a problem, taking something bad, taking a person who irritates you and saying this is my holy teacher and saying thank you, thank you for testing me in my patience practice.

Shantideva calls it a “strategic alliance.” He uses an ancient Sanskrit term that is like a strategic alliance: you supply the object of irritation, I’ll supply the patience, we’ll get my ass to enlightenment. Okay? [laughter] [laughs] Thank you. Like that. So you’re going to supply 50% and I’m going to supply 50%.

The idea is that transformation is a useful idea, a useful way of looking at things. It’s also good for creativity in general. If you’ve been around great lamas, like my lama, Khen Rinpoche, they’re constantly using things for things they’re not supposed to be used for, in a very cool way. This is called {tap tsul}, skillful means, or something like that. Like some kind of normal object. Your car breaks down, and you don’t know what to do, and they’ll untie their shoelace—and it doesn’t seem unnatural at all to them, because they’re sensitive to the idea that 50% of the reality of the shoelace is coming from your side—and transform it into a piece of wire to keep the accelerator down. Know what I mean? They don’t see things so much as being from “their own side”, “that thing”, and therefore, they’re able to be very creative.

And if you get into doing Mahamudra, this fifth one, if you get into doing that, it’s very cool... in your work, in your life, in your personal relationships, and in whatever you choose to do, if you’re an artist, dancer, businessman, doesn’t matter, if you get into seeing this kind of emptiness, you can make all kinds of things out of all kinds of things. Any time there’s a disaster at work, suddenly you turn it around. I used to have people accuse me at work of engineering the disaster so that we could turn that way and make more money. See what I mean? And I’d say no, no, I really didn’t intend it. Until the disaster happened I wasn’t thinking about it. But after everything collapsed, I thought well, why not use it as an excuse to go this way and make some more money or something. It’s really good for your personal life, also personal relationships. If something disastrous happens, you can turn it into a way... this is what Lama Zopa’s book is all about. It’s a Kadampa practice, it’s an ancient practice of the early Buddhists of Tibet to use this fifth kind of emptiness, to see that 50% of the disaster is coming from its side, but 50% of whether you get upset with it, or whether you accept it as a disaster, if you choose to look at it a different way, you can change it. Does it work all the time? No. That’s an indication that it’s not the ultimate kind of emptiness. It’s cool, it’s very useful. Does it get you to enlightenment and nirvana?

Not exactly, not quite in that packaging, you've got to go up to the sixth kind of emptiness. We've got to go up to Prasangika, which is the higher half of the Middle-Way School.

Prasangika is a word that means "consequence" and it's a logic term. It means "absurd consequence," and it's the name of the highest school of emptiness thinking, the higher half of the Middle-Way School, accepted by whom as the highest? Lord Buddha, Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Je Tsongkhapa, Lama Zopa, Lama Yeshe, Khen Rinpoche... and all tantric schools. That's the one. That's the one you have to get to. That one is going to be a little higher, there's going to have to be one more step you take. And the highest school believes that if you go up to somebody and you say, did you really think this thing existed from its own side? You see, that's a Prasangika, that's a logical method. It's like asking somebody a question. Did you really think this thing existed from its own side? And you don't say anything else. Prasangikas say that's enough to convey an understanding of emptiness to somebody.

So other people said, well, if you think that, we'll call your school "Prasangika". Because that's that logical method of asking someone a question. Do you honestly believe that that exists from its own side? And just the question itself starts to trigger your thinking. Well, maybe it doesn't. What's he trying to accuse me of? So they name their school after that method. The method is a Prasangika, I just presented you a Prasangika. And that's one way of understanding emptiness.

So their school was named consequence, absurd consequence school. We're going to do that one this evening because night time is a very auspicious time to do emptiness. Night-time is feminine energy. Emptiness is a feminine energy. Compassion is a male energy, day-time is a male energy. It's really good to hit number six in the night-time. I think we'll take a small break, walk around for a minute, and come back like in five, ten minutes and we'll do a Mahamudra meditation on that. Did you have a question?

[student: Yes. How do you define {druppay} again?]

{druppay} means "to exist in that way."

[student: What does {tongwa} mean?]

Oh, {tongwa} means "empty". By the way, it's the verb. {tongpa} is the noun "emptiness", like {tongpanyi}, {shunyata}. {tongwa} means "empty", meaning things don't exist that way. I'll say the whole sentence: It's not true that things exist from their own side, through some unique identity of their own. Rather... here's the rather, right here... seriously... rather, they exist by virtue of appearing to an unaffected state of mind. I'll say it again: things are void of existing from their own side through some unique nature of their own. Rather, they exist by appearing to an unaffected state of mind. Okay? You appear to me and I'll think of you that way and we'll come out with a pen. All right? yeah?

[student: There's something there....]

You're Independent Group.

[student: Cool.]

Yeah. [laughs] I mean, if your mind demands that there must be something there: come on, at least there's a cylinder there. Yes, *a priori* there's a cylinder. And then you think of it as a pen and then we have a pen. You're perfect Independent Group. How are we going to get higher than that? We've got to think about it.

[student: The cylinder's a basis?]

Yes, the cylinder exists *a priori*. There is a cylinder there, and I think of it as a pen, and we have a pen. By the way, they would also say it has to look "pen-nish". I mean, you couldn't hold a brick out there and say, okay, think of it as a pen. [laughter] It's got to be "pen-ny". It has to be screaming out: Don't I look like a pen? Don't you think I'd make a good pen?" And then you might have to say, hey, I think you'd make a good pen. Then, somewhere in the middle, there's a pen.

[student: Is that what they call "transformation"?]

Yeah, transformation. It allows for the process of transformation. Problems don't have to be problems from their own side. That's what Lama Zopa's book is about. 50% of it is coming from your side. If you try to look at them from a different angle... this really works, okay? In business, it's amazing. You can have a major disaster at 4:0' clock on the stock market. By 4:15, George Soros has turned it into a money-making opportunity. He made a billion dollars in a month from England's currency disaster. For him it was a gold-mine while all the people in England were suffering. I think each person paid him £3 or £4 in a few weeks, out of the English treasury, because he saw a way to use it and trade the currencies in the right way. So a whole country is suffering and he's making a billion dollars in one month, because he saw a way to short it or something. So it's a real way of looking at life. You can do it in your personal life. A disaster happens: she breaks up with you, he goes out with somebody else. And then you say, ah, opportunity! [laughs] Like that. You look at it in a new way. Now I can do that three month retreat with Lama Zopa.
[laughter]

Okay, how about taking a break. By the way, I wanted to thank all the people who did the readings... apparently the Xerox machine freaked out and nobody fixed it and it copied thousands of sheets without collating them last night, so Gail and a bunch of her crew were up till 2:0' clock hand collating it. I'd like to thank them.

And I'd like to introduce some of the people from New York who helped. I'll just go around. Ora does all the layout... I do a rough translation of the Tibetan in Roman letters and then she does all the layout. She converts everything, she works out the translation, and she's working very hard on a website where you can download any of these classes that you want, the audio, the video, the homeworks.

Seamus, who's next to her, is our sound man. He's a very famous sound man. He's done Madonna and President Clinton, or ex-President Clinton or whatever.... [laughter] and, kindly, he's dedicated himself to making the sound work in New York. We teach in odd places where we can get a place. We don't have a big place like this. He's very good at wiring it up and working it out.

Christie helps run... we do computer entry of ancient texts for the last ten years, and she helps run... we have an operation in Russia and about twenty in India and she helps run those. Supplies them books from different libraries, get them their money, make excuses when we don't have any money.

Rob helps with all the sound equipment and he's been working on an imaging project in Russia and Mongolia of ancient texts, like doing the digital photography and stuff like that. Who else?

Debbie Bye's a refugee that we picked up in Australia.

Ian back there, his present project... he's working on a hypertext dictionary, meaning someday you'll be able to click on water bowls, and it would go to the day that it was explained by some great lama, and it would give you the Tibetan and it would pronounce the Tibetan for you. So he's working on that. He's also working on a reception with Mercedes... we have a new CD ROM coming out with two and a half thousand scriptures on it. And we gave Lama Zopa a pre-release and we haven't been able to release it yet, but we're working on it. So they're working on that release.

Winston here is in charge of the three-year retreat... purchasing the property, putting up some buildings... and also, he and his wife are responsible for most of the correspondence courses. They have a factory in their basement. They made one kid [laughter] and 3000 correspondence courses. [laughter] It's about a half-million... I don't know... 50,000 tapes have gone out, more than half a million pages of stuff. He's done a lot of that.

That whole thing was designed and executed by John Stillwell, who's here somewhere and who's responsible for running all the classes in New York.

And then Ani Pelma, who's hiding here, who just got out of bed, she's been sick for a couple of days, runs our combination-library-bookshop-teashop... and a very interesting idea that she just got some major funding for is free Dharma articles, meaning that if a student needs a bell or a dorje, she's got capital. It's bought in India, it goes to the student who just pays what it cost in India and there's no profit because we're a sangha and we don't want to make money. So she worked out this really nice system where we get it, as if you were in New Delhi and you just get it for a price like that. She developed that idea. She does a lot of prison work, runs a very successful AA program at her place and stuff like that. I think that's everybody, all the refugees from New York.

[burst of clapping from audience]

And that's why you're getting homework and stuff like that.

And also Maya Farrell, who lives here, but she did all the design for the CD ROM, artwork and all the layout, an 800 page manual and 10,000 changes and all without going crazy.

Okay, we're going to do meditation. We'll go through the preliminaries and then we'll do the actual meditation. So get comfortable and please don't move after that. If you have to stick your legs out, stick your legs out. Blow your nose now. And forever hold your peace. After this, if you get a scratch, don't scratch it, just watch it. It's kind of cool, they kind of fade away after a while. If your legs hurt, don't move, they fall asleep after a while.

First watch your breath, which means put your mind on the tip of your nose, your nostrils, and watch it. Personally I find it very useful to try and tune in to the sound of the blood in my ears, which brings the breath down. You know, there's a kind of whoosh of the blood... if you're quiet, you can hear it on your eardrums, or you can hear the air hitting your ear drums, and then that brings your breath down real fast.

The next step is to take refuge. You can mix it up. You can take refuge in different ones of the three jewels. How about taking refuge in your root lama, Lama Zopa?

Then think about Bodhichitta, some specific person you know who has a problem today.

Invite your lama to come sit before you. Or any other holy being that you feel close to. Try to visualize them nicely. Try not to visualize a photo or tanka, try to visualize a real person.

Then bow down to them. Mentally, it means think about at least one amazing quality that they have.

Now make them an offering, especially something good about your practice or some little promise to practice something later on today. Something specific that you can offer them.

Think of the most negative thing you did today, thought, word, most negative thing. Purify it. The best way to purify it is to admit how dumb it was. Play it back a few times, watch yourself say that thing or think that thing a few times. It's usually embarrassing to watch it play a few times.

Now do the opposite with just as much effort. Think of the best thing you've done today and be happy about it.

Two more steps. First, ask for teachings, which means, ask your lama for the blessing to understand whatever teachings you get at the deepest level.

Then lastly, ask your lamas to stay with you, and ask your dharma friends and anyone else who may not be a Buddhist but who, when you're around them, they improve your behavior, they make you more gentle or more noble.

Those are the preliminaries. This is a good place to shift, if you have to shift, or scratch something or blow something.

Then, when you're ready, go back to your breath. Then focus your mind on your favorite physical object, the thing that you own that you like the most. For me, it's my laptop. Maybe it's your stereo, maybe it's your car, a piece of clothing, a piece of jewelry, a gift that someone gave you that you value.

Without taking your eyes off that object, then slip your worldview between your eyes and the object. In this case, it's your tendency to see the object as something durable, as something that will last, something permanent. See it through those rose-colored glasses. It's your first level of ignorance. Catch yourself thinking of that object as something you're going to have for a while.

Now strip that away and see it for what it really is. Take the {gakja} away and the emptiness of that {gakja}, the absence of that self-existent thing that doesn't exist is an object that you're going to lose quite soon. It's passing through your life at a high rate of speed and you'll lose it soon. You'll be separated soon. Look at it that way.

Now go back to just looking at it, just focussing on the object by itself. Now look at it through the rose-colored glasses of ownership, that you own it, meaning that you control where it goes, you control who uses it, you control where it's put in your house, you control whether it leaves your house. That's ownership. Look at it in that light, as if you own it and get the emotion or the feeling of what it is to own it.

Then strip away that {gakja}, that non-existent ownership, it doesn't exist, and look at the object again, truly, as being empty of ownership. You don't own it, you don't control it, you can't tell me where it will be tomorrow, it could be taken from you at any time by forces way beyond your control.

Now we'll go to emptiness flavor three. Focus back on the object again, without thinking anything about it, just look at it.

Now try to picture you and the object. Like my laptop, sitting on my lap, or that ring on your finger. Try to get a picture of you and the object, both.

And then, very subtly, try to tune in on your own feelings about where those two things came from. If you really check carefully, you have this gut feeling that the laptop came from this factory, plastics, resistors, all these parts... and then it came to the store and I went to the store and I bought it and that's how we met. I was born in a certain place, and I moved around this country and I ended up in a certain place, and then I ended up in that store and I met the laptop and that's how we met each other. Get the feeling that that's how you believe it happened. Some kind of random thing.

Now strip away that {gakja}, that self-existent thing, the non-truth about that meeting. Actually, what really happened is that you did something in the past that brought you to that store, and you also did something in the past that brought the computer to that store. There are no accidents in life, there's no randomness at all.

Every single object you encounter, every thought you encounter, is a creation of your own karma from the past. The laptop coming into the store and being created at all, and you, being in the store to buy it, have both come from the same karma. There are no accidents.

Go back to the laptop... sorry, your favorite object. And then try to get in tune with another flavor of your ignorance about it, which is, when you look at it, it has this warm fuzzy glow about it, that it's inherently a good thing, that any reasonable person would find it meaningful and beautiful, that any person in their right mind would find this a beautiful and valuable thing.

Now strip away that {gakja}, see that that's not true, strip away that warm, fuzzy feeling about it, strip away your bias about it, try specifically to think of someone who might think that's the ugliest thing in the world, the most useful thing in the world, like your wife might think that about your laptop.

And that's the end of that meditation. Now focus back on the lama, or the person who's sitting with you. Ask them to come into you and bless your mind. They start to rise up in the air and they get smaller and smaller, and they come and rest on the top of your head, turning the same way as you're facing, like three inches high.

Then they come straight down into your heart, getting smaller and smaller as they come until they're in a small chamber the size of a pea, at the level of your heart, but behind your heart, closer to your backbone.

And then, when your mind goes inside the pea, there's this big place, and lots of space and beautiful light, and your lama is sitting on this great lotus flower and on top of the flower is a white disk made of light, and they're sitting on top of that, very happy.

Just talking about emptiness is one of the holiest things you can do, so we collected a lot of good karma and we'll reinvest it now. Imagine a light coming out of your lama's heart, your heart, and it's touching people across the whole country, that they might hear about emptiness in this lifetime.

Then we'll do a dedication prayer.

[Dedication]

Okay, thank you.

Sunday Session

[Prayer]

I'm going to assume you had as big a dinner as I had. [laughs] The cooks are too good, they should get somebody worse. [laughs] [laughter] I could cook.

So we'll do a little class first, but not too much, because then we get sleepy. There's a small window of opportunity between there somewhere.

We'll talk about the emptiness flavor number six. Oh, the custom is to go through the first five flavors first. First one was... we'll call it permanence. The emptiness of permanence, devoid of permanence, void of permanence, absent of permanence, that's all. Second one?

[students: Ownership.]

Yeah, ownership, owing things. So the application of the second flavor of emptiness is in the false idea of ownership, in the false idea of permanence. What was the third one?

[students: No accidents.]

Okay. Let's call it "chance", or things happening by chance. Things happening just by chance. These are all {gakjas}. {gakja} meaning "self-existent object." These are all self-existent objects. They don't exist, they're non-entities and they cause you all your suffering. You're responding to the influence of something that doesn't even exist. Your life is made miserable by these three things that don't even exist. [laughs] It would be almost more comforting if it were something more substantial, know what I mean? Like if there were some demons we had to fight, and whoever could wrestle better would win. But we're wrestling against things that never existed anyway, that makes it ironic as well as frustrating. [laughs] [laughter]. Number four?

[students: Judgments.]

Yeah. What do you want to call it? Uninformed judgment or something?

[students: Constructs?]

It's something like bias, I guess. It's something that doesn't exist, that your favorite song is really the best song, see what I mean?

[students: Absence of characteristics?]

Well, it has its characteristics of being a song or something like that, it has notes and they go up and down....

[students: Prejudice or value judgments...]

Prejudice exists. It has to be... truly better songs, or something like that, see what I mean? No, value judgments are what are produced by believing in this thing. But what is this thing?

[students: [unclear] Constructs?]

There are lots of constructs that are useful, like democracy. It's the object of a belief... it's the object of bias, it's the object of your belief that Neil Young produces the best music, it's a self-existently better Neil Young, or something like that.

[students: Maybe it's a true good and bad [unclear]; personal taste.]

[laughs] [laughter]

Personal taste. We had a big dinner. [laughter]

[students: [unclear] ... all the time.... the meaning of an object?]

But that applies to almost all of them. Inherent betterness? I don't know.

[students: [unclear]]

Self-existent betterness....

[students: Self-existent qualities?]

Hmmm.... it's too broad. They said self-existent qualities. I don't know how to say it.. indisputable...]

[students: The best.]

That's okay. [laughter] But isn't the Buddha indisputable... anyway...]

[students: [unclear]]

What's that?

[students: [unclear]]

[laughter]

No, that's the mental affliction that comes by focussing on this object. This object... we'll just say, songs that are good from their own side, how's that?

[laughter]

[students: ...judgements are creations?]

How about judgments that aren't creations? How's that? Judgments that are not just made up by you. Then you can have fights with somebody, you can say: it's not me, it's natural, or it's the way of things that Neil Young is the best, it's not my opinion, and anyone who knows anything about music could see that. This state of mind is denying that that is something that you created. {rang gi tsenneyi kyi druppa mayingpa}. It's not something that I've created. It's not {kuntak} by me, if this person knows Mind-Only School. It's not something that I've created. It is true, in and of itself, universally, that Neil Young is the best.

[students: [unclear]]

I wouldn't say that. There are no objects of judgment which are not creations. How's that? And you've got to get used to that. Basically, what it boils down to is that it's not true that one song is not better than another song from its own side, and that leads on to another truth, which is that you can't really judge the people around you. You can judge the action and condemn their actions, but you can't condemn their motivations. They could be Bodhisattvas who've seen that this is necessary or something. You can't judge people. {nga dang nga da marimba shengetse suma michate nyambar gyurtare}, the very famous opening lines of a sutra. "If you're not me (meaning an omniscient being, this is Lord Buddha speaking), or like me, (meaning another omniscient being), {shengetse suma michate} don't judge other people (nyamba gotare} or you will fall down to the hell realms." Don't do it. So that's all. Just realize that what you take to be the best music or the best food or the best thing to do right now is your construct and doesn't have any reality from its own side. Something like that. Number five?

[students: [unclear]]

We should say... what would be the opposite of that? You see, these are {gakjas}, these are things that we deny. We deny that a problem is self-existently a bad thing. See what I mean? Like true problems?

[students: Universal... [unclear]]

It mostly refers to problems, true problems. Like if you get fired from your job, it is a real problem, that you can't interpret it in a different way. That you can't do lo jong on it, that you can't apply lo jong to it, you can't transform it. What would be the opposite of being able to be transformed?

[students: Things that are only way, fixed problems...[unclear]]

Fixed problems. Inherent problems? That's tricky?

[students: Universal, because everyone and everything would have to appear the same way, right?]

That's a different point though. Problems that can't opportunities, or something like that?

[students: It's not just problems, though...]

Yeah, it's not just problems. But in the art of dealing with your mental afflictions, we're talking mainly about problems. How about absolute problems? Absolute problems. [laughter] By the way, I'm going to go back to number five before we get to number six. Number five is a view of reality, lower Madhyamika School... why are they lower? What makes the view wrong? There's got to be some catch here?

[students: [unclear]]

We'll talk about it. The point of number five is transforming... when you say "transforming problems," you're already assuming the existence of a problem. Know what I mean? When you say: "transform the problem into something good", then you're presupposing the presence of a problem, and you're saying, there's a problem out there, there's a cylinder asking to be called "pen", and then I call it a pen. And then you're down already in the lower Madhyamika school. Why? Because you're saying there is some existence from its own side, 50%. And 50% of the existence is imputed by me. Then 50-50 we get a 100% and there's a pen. There's a problem, I approach it a certain way, and by looking at it in different ways, I can learn to cope with problems, I can learn to deal with problems. And each one of these is a different level of a Buddhist.

You've heard Buddhist lectures where they said the goal of life was not to be attached to things, so if you study impermanence really well, you'll be happier. Is that the goal of Buddhism? To deal with crap in a good way? Is the goal just to learn to cope with crap? See what I mean? Is that the goal of our lives? Do you want to get to seventy years old and be just a good crap-coper? [laughter] Know what I mean? [laughter] No, really, they present it like that. Is that your goal in life? Or do you just want to become the kind of person who, while thieves are ransacking your house, you say, yeah, I knew I didn't own that. [laughter] Know what I mean? We're working up the ladder. Or is it comforting to know, if you should get into a car accident, that you and the car accident are coming from the same karma? [laughs] [laughter] That's okay, you might try to be a better person or something. There's some comfort in knowing that you've done it to yourself, I guess. [laughter] I read an interview with His Holiness. The interviewer said, you're very pessimistic, in your view of life everything is suffering. And His Holiness was giggling the whole time [laughter] and they said, why are you giggling? Why aren't you depressed? And he said, well, there's a certain virtue to admitting what's really going on. [laughs] [laughter].

Number four would be interesting if you truly didn't judge other people, if you didn't insist that your way was the best all the time. If you could accept the idea that your favorite song.... my college roommate called Neil Young "The Screaming Eunuch". [laughter] When I played Neil Young all night, he was tortured. So apparently it's not self-existent. It would lead to a lot less conflict if we truly appreciated that our favorite song might sound like torture to someone else. That would lead to a lot less mental afflictions in the world.

Then the last one, and now we're getting very close to the truth, we're getting very close to number six.

Number five is like lo-jong, number five is Kadampa, it's like, okay, there's crap in the world, try to transform it, try to find the silver lining as we used to say, try to make the best of a bad situation. When the Chinese kick you out of your country, try to think of them in good terms, try to think that they're teaching me about my grasping and my ownership and they've taught me a lot of good lessons. And the idea is that there is a problem here, but try to see it in a useful light and get some mileage out of it.

But the assumption is that there is a problem around you, and that's the way it's going to be. That's a lower Madhyamika school approach. There's a problem out there, which is the cylinder appearing to you. And then you have your choice as to how you look at this problem, because 50% of reality is coming from your side, is coming from how you look at this problem. So you can adjust things, you can see things in a favorable light, you can do tricks to yourself to make yourself happy. And Arya Nagarjuna in his "Letter To A Friend" {bk: Surleka}, says the same thing. He goes halfway through the book explaining what he calls band-aids. These are band-aids. They're just ways of looking at problems that make life a little easier, but it's not an ultimate solution, you're not removing those problems. You're just learning to look at them in a fresh light, and maybe that will help you. Half-way through that book, you can feel a sudden shock, and he says, now I'll tell you the real way to get rid of your problems, and then he goes to number six. He's the great master of number six. So here's number six. Rich, you had a question?

[student: On number five. I have a question referring to the car accident. That's the cylinder? And the problem is something I'm putting on still (??) [unclear]]

We're going one step up from that, we're saying you've already labeled it as a problem, we're assuming you've already labeled it as a problem. Now what do you do with that?

[student: [unclear]]

We'll talk about it. It's called the onion skin theory of emptiness. You're labeling a problem on a car accident, on a collision of vehicles... see what I mean? We'll talk about it.

Say {ming de} [repeat] {shaktsam} [repeat] {mayinpar} [repeat] {yu} [repeat] {rang gi} [repeat] {duluksu} [repeat] {drupay} [repeat] {tongwa} [repeat]. Okay, one more time. {ming de} [repeat] {shaktsam} [repeat] {mayinpar} [repeat] {yu} [repeat] {rang gi} [repeat] {duluksu} [repeat] {drupay} [repeat] {tongwa} [repeat].

Okay, who accepts number six as being the highest? I repeat, Lord Buddha, no question, there's no debate about it, I'm not being figurative, this is literal. The highest position, accepted by Lord Buddha, Chandrakirti, Je Tsongkhapa, His Holiness, The Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa, Khen Rinpoche, everybody, and all tantric schools. You must get this one to practice tantra. So here we go. {ming} means "names", {de} means "terms", {shakpa} means "established as existing", established through names and terms, {tsam} means "just", only that, "just established through names and terms", and that's what they believe everything is, and we'll talk about that. Just the result of a process of labeling. {mayinpa} means "suppose it wasn't that way", okay?

{mayinpa} means “suppose it was not that way.” And suppose instead, that object, {rang gi duluksu drupa}, “had some existence from its own side, through its own unique way of being”. Suppose it had some unique identity of its own, from its own side, suppose the pen had some unique identity of its own from its own side, rather than being a result of the labeling process. Okay, suppose the pen had some unique identity of its own from its own side, independent of me naming it or labeling it something. That would be the {gakja}. That’s what doesn’t exist. And the absence of that, {tongwa}, is the ultimate meaning of emptiness. {tongwa} means “empty”, “absence”, things are absent of that quality.

I’ll give you a real brief example. This is an old one, people in New York are tired of it, sorry, people around the world are tired of it. [laughter] But anyway, very simply... by the way, first I have to tell you that the words “name” and “term”, {ming de}, are code words for the labeling process, meaning verbally or mentally you’re labeling this thing a pen. So {ming} means, verbally you’re calling it a pen. {de} means mentally imputing it to be something, mentally calling it something, conceptualizing it as something. So the second one is more conceptualizing something in a certain way. You can call it projecting. And it’s very very simple. What do I have in my hand?

[student: Nothing.]

Anyone who says “nothing” gets a Hitler mustache. [laughs] [laughter]. No, it’s a pen, you’ve seen me use it, you know it’s a pen. All right? Now what do they mean in Madhyamika Prasangika when they say it’s just a projection? It’s very simple. You see it as a pen. Is it a pen from its own side? Let’s investigate that. Is it 50% pen from its own side like which school says? The Independent Group, lower Madhyamika. Is it 50% from its own side, or is it 100% from its own side like everybody else says, Mind-Only on down? Or is it nothing from its own side? Let’s check.

Suppose a dog comes in here, what’s his name, Wolf, nice dog. And I cover this with beef grease and I say, here Wolf, what’s this? And he’ll just grab it and start chewing on it. To a dog, this thing is a perfect shape to chew on. It’s a chewable object, a very nice thing to chew on. When dogs see this cylinder, they automatically conceptualize it as something to chew on. Do they conceptualize it as a pen? Does it appear to them as a pen? That’s the emptiness of a pen. It doesn’t get any more mystical than that, sorry. [laughter] [laughs] That’s all there is, that’s the emptiness of the pen. There is no pen that comes from its own side, because if it did come from its own side, a dog would see it as a pen. So it’s not really fair to say, I showed the pen to the dog and he chewed it. If you believe in animal rights, you have to say I showed the cylinder to the dog and he chewed it. So really, you have to say it that way and that’s all.

The emptiness of this pen is that there’s nothing “pen” about it, get it? There’s nothing “pennish” coming from its side. If there was, a dog would be torn between chewing it and writing a dog love letter. Know what I mean? The dog would look confused for a while and would try to decide... so there’s nothing “pen-ny” coming from its side. There’s no pen coming from this cylinder. You have to get used to that. That’s it’s emptiness. If you see it as a pen, that’s your trip, and if you see it as a chewable object, you’re on a different trip. But there’s no pen coming from its side. That’s the emptiness of the pen.

By the way, in Madhyamika, in the Madhyamika Avatara of Chandrakirti, this is taught in a subject called {chumbab}.

Say {chumbab}. [repeat] {chumbab} means water flow, or water fall, and it's a section... I always think of our old dharma center in Hell's Kitchen in the basement, and it was dark and wet and there was one light coming down and I imagined three beings sitting around a poker table. All you can see is this triangle of light, and you're standing back in the dark. I imagine this waitress coming in and setting a glass of liquid in the middle of the table. Around the table playing poker are a {preata}, a {deva}, a worldly deva, meaning a worldly pleasure being, and a human being. They're playing cards and the waitress comes and sets a glass of liquid down in the middle. And then you're going to see in the reading, the last part of your reading tonight, which you'll get tomorrow... [laughter]—it's done, it's not yet xeroxed, you can go to Kinkos around 3:00 a.m. and get it—that they discussed water, the idea of water, it's called "the river of water". And what it means is that sitting around the same table, looking at the same glass, the {preata} might see something refreshing, but when he holds it up to his mouth and gets close, it changes into pus and blood, like some disgusting rotten stuff, and he can't drink it, he's repulsed by it. The human picks up the glass, sees water and drinks water. The deva picks up the glass and drinks {amrita}, holy nectar, the nectar of immortality, to them it's some unbelievable elixir. So that's a teaching on emptiness.

And then they go into a huge debate on... are they all having a {tsema}, for example, are they all having a {pramana}, are they all having a valid cognition, perception? Are their perceptions valid? Yes! What does valid mean? Valid means "okay", given their conditions, given their set of circumstances, they're seeing what they're supposed to see. So they're all having a valid perception. So does that mean that one object is three objects at once? Three contradictory objects at once? Can blue be red? That's the question. You have to say maybe, I don't know. I mean, if you have the karma to see blue as red, which some people do. [laughs] Long story.

Anyway, it's a huge debate, but what it boils down to is the pen and the chewable object. Same thing, same principle. Now there's a couple of interesting side things to that, and it's not the point tonight, but if you hold this thing up and suddenly your mouth starts to water, it means... get this... that's what an animal rebirth is. Animal rebirths are not self-existent. There's no dog body factory out in Kansas... I always imagine it in the midwest, I don't know why. There's a factory cranking out dog bodies, and then they cut the top open and they catch spirits, souls, stuff them in there. That's what your idea of rebirth is. Someone asks, do you believe in rebirth? I say yes. They ask, do you really believe your soul can get stuffed into an animal? You think of rebirth like that. Now change that. Think of rebirth as a shift in your perceptions. You start to see this not as a pen... when your mouth starts to water when you see cylinders, you know you is a dog. [laughter] That's the point. That's how easy it is to get born in an animal realm. It's a simple shift in your perceptions. It's not like you have to grow hair or something like that. When you look down at your hand, sorry, five cylinders, you will see a paw. And that's what it is to be a dog, and there's nothing other than that, and you've got to get used to that. It's not like there are dogs sitting there already and they stuff you into it. You start seeing the world as a dog, which makes you a dog, because there is no world, there is no standard world that you are reinterpreting.

That's lower Madhyamika: there's a world and everyone's interpreting it their own way. It's not like that. There's no standard world. You can't say water's more reasonable than pus. You can't say somebody's the standard and everybody else is interpreting it. That's lower Madhyamika.

What higher Madhyamika says is that there is no standard reality. And everyone sees reality their own way. Everyone's seeing something their own way, but there isn't a base reality that's like, oh, human reality's the basis, and then animals are dumb and devas are smarter, or something like that. It doesn't work like that. There is no base reality. There is no existence of the cylinder from its own side, either.

I was in Australia doing this *shtick* in front of 250 people in Melbourne. And they all got it, it was really cool. It was a really weird night, and they were all strangers, and they got the thing about the pen. Next morning I get a phone call. "This is Nicky Ribush's mummy. I must meet you." I said, okay, I'm over at this Tara place. And she said, "okay, I'll be there for breakfast. I have to see you immediately." So I said to myself, Nick Ribush is really cool. I've got to meet his mother so I can make fun of him later. [laughter] So I meet his mom, and she comes in. She's very old and she sits down and says, "I just have one question to ask you." I said, what's that? She said, "you said that I see the cylinder as a pen and the dog sees the cylinder as a chewable thing". I said, "that's right". "But the *cylinder*," she said, "what about the *cylinder*?" [laughter] You see? She got it. She really got it. And usually you don't bring this up. Usually you don't go that far. When you're doing a public lecture, in the Music Hall at Melbourne, you don't go down to the pen.

By the way, this is the big difference between higher Madhyamika and lower Madhyamika... here it is... it's coming right now, Mrs. Ribush' question. The pen, sorry, the cylinder, is your projection on to two pieces of cylinder. Okay? There's no cylinder either, and that's the big difference. {tanye takpay takdun tselway tse na manye} means when you go looking for the thing that you're calling a pen, which is a cylinder, and then you go looking for a cylinder, you won't find that either. And you could keep going down, you could break this thing in half, now the bottom of the cylinder is just my projection on to two pieces of the bottom, and then the bottom of the bottom of the cylinder is just my projection on the upper part of the bottom of the cylinder and the bottom part of the bottom of the cylinder. And you can go on and on and on like that, and that's the big difference—there is no base reality and you've got to get used to that.

Does that mean that pens don't work? Anybody who thinks that, come up and get your mustache. [laughter] Okay? You've got to teach it that way. By the way, that's when you break a Bodhisattva vow about teaching emptiness. If you give somebody what I just said, and then leave them to go home and think about it, like there's nothing, [laughter] then you broke your Bodhisattva vows, then you might freak somebody out. This is not to freak you out. This is the truth and it works. It works. It really does work. How does it work? Wait... let me finish this point. So why do I see it as a pen and why does the dog see it as a chewable thing?

[student: Karma.]

Absolutely one thing—karma. I'm seeing it as a pen because my mind is forcing me to see it as a pen. By the way, it has to be coming from my mind because it ain't coming from the other choice. What was the other choice?

[student: From its own side.]

Yes, it's not coming from its own side, we already established that. By the way, if you ever teach emptiness to plain old non-Buddhist brainwashed people, and they don't know anything about it, they have to accept this point. No reasonable person can deny this point. Given what the dog sees, given what I see, the pen-ness cannot be coming from the side of the object. It must be coming from somewhere else. It's got to be coming from somewhere else. From where? From my mind. {ming de shaktsam}. My mind is labeling it "pen". Verbally you're hearing "pen," if you speak English. But the more important thing is mentally. Mentally, you are organizing its parts into a mental picture called "pen". That's the {de} part, that's the most important part. In your mind, these parts, this black and white and cylinder-ness is being organized into a perfect pen by your mind. And that's the main imputation or labeling, the main process is that your mind is taking all those indicators and fashioning a nice pretty pen, a perfect pen, in your mind. And that's how you see it.

The next thing you have to say to people when you're teaching emptiness is, do you think that's a voluntary thing? In other words, given the fact that this pen is a construct of my mind, that I'm creating it in my head, that I'm making this cylinder into a pen from my side. Given that process, do you think it's possible to just decide that this is going to be a hundred dollar bill? Do you think it's possible to just decide that this is going to be a hundred dollar bill? Obviously not.

That idea went out when you were six or seven years old and Aunt Joan was sick and they told you, go to church and pray for her. She has cancer, pray that she doesn't die. And you go to the church and you say, please god, make her live. And you believe it. You go to church and you say please, please, please, I'll do anything, I'll make my bed every night, just make sure Auntie Joan doesn't die. And then a couple of weeks later you find out that Auntie Joan died. And you go through this sort of thing a few times. And then you started to doubt that whole system, you see? That's the concept that you could just wish it to be whatever you want. It's a tempting thought, right? This is a construct of my mind. It's just a cylinder. Let's make it a cylinder of platinum or gold or something like that. Then you close your eyes real hard and you wish, and then you look at it again, but it's still a pen. [laughs] [laughter] All right? That's because you can't make it change by wishing. You are at the mercy of your past deeds. Absolutely at the mercy of your past deeds. They call it infallible, right? Infallible means there's no exemptions or anything like that. This cylinder is going to be exactly what you deserve. Karma is ultimate justice. It never wavers a micrometer. It always gives you exactly what you deserve. If you see it as a pen, that's because your mind is forced to see it as a pen by certain impressions that you planted there in the past. And it's going to be a pen for you as long as you lead that kind of life, as long as you continue to collect karma, lousy good karma, right? Why? Why is it dirty good karma? It wears out. The fact that the pen runs out of ink... does it run out of ink from its own side?

[student: Definitely not.]

Does anything happen from its own side? Come on! No! Your karma to have a working pen is wearing out as we speak. You're probably glad. [laughs] [laughter] All right? That's what the Buddha meant in the Heart Sutra when he said {ming me na [unclear]}. He said nothing exists, meaning, nothing exists from its own side. You're creating all of it. Anything good in your life, by definition, is wearing out. Always. Because you're projecting it. And the projection will wear out— as the imprint on your mind gets less by expressing itself, things wear out. Then what happens? People die. It causes death itself. It's very interesting. It's what causes death, that continual using up of that karma. Is death another object that doesn't exist from its own side? Yeah, sure. {unclear} If something exists, it always works that way. According to the highest teachings of Buddhism, everything is that way, your death is that way.

Now we get into some very interesting territory, extremely interesting territory. If number six is correct, it's not... what was number five? Transformation. Forget transformation! Let's talk about Buddha paradise. See what I mean? Big difference, huge leap. One big step for mankind. [laughter] Really! To go from number five to number six is mind-boggling. What's number five? Coping with crap. Really. Bad things are happening, but I'm a Buddhist, stoic Buddhist, so I'll try to see it in the best light, even though they stole all my money. [laughter] They're my teacher. That's okay, you can do that, that's useful, that's important. That's called transformation.

Now we're talking about creation. Creating your own Buddha paradise. You go from number five to number six and everything is possible. Very very interesting. See? The assertion of Arya Nagarjuna is that as long as a single scrap of reality is coming from its own side, you're stuck, you can't become a Buddha. If anything about my arm is arm from my own side, I'm stuck with blood and guts and bones. But, if Mrs. Ribush's cylinder is also empty, and only Prasangika says that, then everything is possible, then I can turn this arm into Manjushri's arm. If there's not a scrap of self-existence, if nothing is coming from its own side, then there's hope, then everything can happen. If nothing is coming from its own side, then there's hope, then everything can happen. So now you go from transformation to creation of Buddha paradise. It's very cool, it makes all things possible. Number six is the only one that really makes all things possible. Very very very profound. You go from coping with crap to no more crap. Ever! Much preferable. See what I mean? A much better way to be. So then you look down and you can see Manjushri's arm, then it's all over. Last question, and then I'll take some questions.

How do you make it happen? And by the way, I'll teach you the concept—it's the difference between Robot Claws and gardening. Say Robot Claws. [laughter] [repeat] gardening [repeat]. [laughter] What's Robot Claws mean? These are Robot Claws, okay? This is trying to manipulate your reality that has self-existence, and now I get very serious. Lama Zopa is ill. So how are we going to deal with it? Robot Claws theory... see, Robot Claws deal with self-existent objects that come from their own side. So he's ill from his own side. How do we fix that? Get him some better medicine, make sure he has the right doctor, see that his diet is correct. These are all self-existent methods of fixing Lama Zopa. And then you go... that's not really what cures him or doesn't cure him. Why not? Prove it! Because it doesn't always work! I hate to be so obvious. After all these years of the AMA, it's so obvious.

If something doesn't always work, you don't do that anymore. Find something that always works. See what I mean? It's very very interesting. I spoke about it in San Francisco. For those of you who weren't there, we were talking about if a new airline opened up... you buy a ticket, because it's the cheapest since they're trying to get people on their airline. And you go to the door of the plane and there's a stewardess and she says, what kind of drink would you like when we take off? You say, I'll take an orange juice, no ice. And then she says, what kind of magazine would you like? And you say, Time, please don't give me Golf Digest. And then she says, could you sign this waiver sir, before you get on the plane? You ask why. She says, because we kind of figured out how to fly this thing but sometimes it goes, and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it falls down, a certain percentage of the time it falls down. We just haven't figured out how it works yet. We've got it down almost perfect, but one out of ten.... [laughter] So, could you just sign here?

Would you get in the plane? [laughter] Even if it was cheaper? [laughter]...I mean, Tower Air is similar. But anyway, that's what you're dealing with when you try to solve problems selfexistently. I call it Robot Claws. They crush the things that you're trying to fix, you see? Like you're trying to fix this and fix that and it doesn't work. Your whole life is the story of Robot Claws. You've been doing it your whole life. If I just had a little more exercise, if I just moved to Florida, if I just took these vitamins, if I could just get a different job with a different boss...and you keep trying to fix things this way.

And what it means is that you're dealing with self-existent objects. Lama Zopa's illness is self-existent. It has some reality from its own side, a certain percentage of it hasn't come from karma. In your mind you say, Petra's right, I'll let some lobsters go next week. But in the meantime, let's make sure he has the right medicine. Because karma is only what? 20%? 40%? 60% of the problem? See what I mean? You've either got to be Prasangika or not. You've either got to buy it as a package or not. You can't say, oh, 50% is karma and 50% is what kind of doctor we find for Lama Zopa. You have to find out what karma is causing this illness and change the karma. And then the perception must change, must get better.

And the reason you're not happy now, and the reason you're getting old now, is that you didn't figure this out. It's very cool. Stop working with Robot Claws. Stop trying to affect your reality that way, it doesn't work. Why? Because it's not consistent, the results are not consistent! That's not what makes it fly. Okay? If it was the right thing to do, it would work every time. And it doesn't work every time, so it's not what's causing Lama Zopa's illness. And that's not how you're going to fix it. So what are you going to do? You find the real causes.

I visualize the real cause as coming up like this, like gardening. Why do I say gardening? I have a thing about gardens, okay. You have to find the real causes for any... let's talk about your own illness. Say you yourself were ill. {jimbay longchu chun gi de}. Very famous. {jimbay long chu} means, the Buddha said, you want to get rich? Give stuff away. {chun gi de}. Want to be healthy and in a good state of mind? You want to be happy, stop depression permanently? Keep your vows. And nothing else does it. It's very interesting.

Tomorrow morning we'll start real Mahamudra meditation. Up to now we had a {ta tri}. What's the difference?

[student: We're not focusing on the mind.]

Yeah, we're not focussing on the mind yet. We've still been dealing with pens and money and stuff like that. Your favorite thing, what was your favorite thing? [laughs] I don't know. But tomorrow morning we'll stop dealing with those things and start dealing with the mind. Then we shift from a {ta tri} to a Mahamudra meditation. Up till now, it's been a meditation on emptiness. Tomorrow, we'll take the object of the mind as an object. We'll stop fooling around with my laptop or whatever it was for you.

So what's the difference? The difference is that, if that's how reality works, you now have to change your behavior. You don't get what you want by Robot Claw behavior. It obviously doesn't work because it hasn't worked up to now and I doubt that things are going to change in the second half of your life. This approach is not suddenly going to work, so you've got nothing to lose. I always think like that. I undertake some risky tantric thinking, and I'm always a little hesitant to go the next leap and then I say, well, what the hell? What do I have to lose? It didn't work so far. That whole approach before of trying to cure illness with different medicines and things like that, it doesn't work.

So what's really causing the illness? You didn't keep your vows. You didn't keep your Pratimoksha, Bodhisattva and Tantric Vows, those three things. And if you don't have vows, then it's the ten non-virtues. You want to fix your health? Keep your vows. It's very weird. It's a whole new approach. Should I still take medicine? Take medicine, it's okay. But there's no inherent quality in the medicine that will cure you. Nothing exists from its own side. If the medicine works, it's only because you kept your vows. If the medicine works, it's only because you kept your vows. If the medicine doesn't work, it's only because you....

[student: Didn't keep your vows.]

Didn't keep your vows, okay. [laughs] It's very cool. So should you stop taking medicine? That's not the point. Take whatever you want. Whether it works or not is totally dependent on something else. I was thinking this morning of a leak in the roof of my lama's house. I've been fixing that leak since I was 23 years old. [laughter] First, I fixed this part of the roof, but it keeps leaking, so I fix this other part of the roof, and I wait, and it keeps leaking, then when I was about 30 something, we figured out it was leaking in the northwest corner and migrating down a long piece of wood to his room. This leak was appearing in one side of the house but it was leaking down the roof from another side of the house. Karma works just the same. I mean, it's not obvious, so it takes you a long time to figure it out. If you're getting sick, it has nothing to do with the roof right over your head. It's everything to do with whether you kept your vows at work six months ago... which is why you caught a cold. You've got to get used to that, you've got to start thinking that way, that's Prasangika.

Sickness doesn't exist from its own side. It just doesn't exist from its own side. Change your worldview. You've got nothing to lose, the old one doesn't work and you're getting older. Try something else. My mom was dying of breast cancer.

I was in Dharamsala studying. I wrote her a letter and said, come to Dharamsala, what have you got to lose? She came, it was totally logical. The doctors had said, forget it, it's hopeless. So she got on a plane and came to India and it was great. You've got nothing to lose but your chains. Know what I mean? It's not working. The first worldview you have fits somewhere in the first five or worse. You've got nothing to lose. Try it! The idea is that karma is making everything. And now you don't have to think of karma as a self-existent thing, it's coming out of your mind. What I explained about the pen is true about everything around you. Which means everything can become a tantric paradise, it's really cool. You keep your vows... I don't even have to say you could see everything as a tantric paradise. You'll be forced to see everything as a tantric paradise.

People ask me, should I take this initiation or that initiation, I say, keep your vows. You want to see a tantric paradise? Keep your vows. Keep your ten vows. You'll be forced to see a tantric paradise. Go ahead, have initiation. Whether it works or not is a totally different question. Initiations only work if you keep your tantric vows. They have no effect on people who don't keep their tantric vows. Can you keep your tantric vows only dimly knowing them and never checking them? No! Every tantric initiation... Annutara says, you have to keep {tundruk}, you have to check them six times a day. You have to look at them. You can't just dimly try to think, maybe I'm keeping them. You must keep them very very carefully. And then if everything I said is correct, the aging process itself will start to stop. You would get younger. It's very interesting. There's no problem with that idea. And that's not attachment or some kind of wrong thing. We're not supposed to put up with crap and die like that... it's not true. You would start to get younger. And then eventually, the whole substance of your arm would change. That's {dzogrim}, highest tantric practice. Channels, drops, winds, the change in your worldview physically changes your body. And when you get to {dzogrim}, you can study how. But it's very cool. Changing the way you think, changes your spiritual body which transforms your physical body. It's very cool. Just to think you could get younger by thinking certain ways, by changing the way you look at things, is very powerful. So I like number six, I don't know about you. [laughter]

By the way, does this sound like a {minje kyebar chen}? What's a {minje kyebar chen}? It was the fourth selling point for doing Mahamudra. What was the fourth selling point? Come on...

[student: It's very powerful..]

It sets you up perfectly for tantra. Do you feel it? Do you get it? It's a riot. It's a perfect set-up for tantra. Now you can just slide into tantra. If you do Mahamudra, and if you study emptiness this way, then you can sense, oh boy, now I can just slide into that. {kyerim} and {dzokrim}. Now I can see it would be very easy, because it's true, it could work. See what I mean? It's very cool. The sixth worldview is very cool. We'll call it creation. That you could create your own Buddha paradise. I'll take a few questions, then we'll take a break, then we'll start a Mahamudra meditation, we'll do a little taste, and then tomorrow morning we'll continue.

[student: Suppose you had polio and you were in a wheelchair. Then you took vows and knew you were keeping your vows perfectly, hypothetically, could the fact that the person [unclear] karma [unclear] did something previous to their vows?]

So she's asking this: suppose a person already has polio, is already in a wheelchair, and then they work very hard and they keep their vows. And {takpay taktsam gyupa} means, in theory, suppose there was a person who could keep their vows perfectly, and after they were keeping their vows perfectly, then why would they still be in their wheelchair in five months, or something like that? Why is that? Why I call it gardening is that there's a maturing process, there's a ripening process. It takes time. The mental seed is put in your mind by keeping your vows, and then it ripens. The point of tantra is that by committing especially powerful karma, you accelerate the ripening process. So you can make it happen in one lifetime, and that's called {tong gyur kyi le}, accepted by all schools of Buddhism, that especially powerful karma can have its results in the same lifetime, later in the same lifetime. And it's not... the process goes like this. This is really cool, you've got to get this. If you keep your vows sort of half-heartedly or pretty good, you will start to get good results, like your life will straighten out, your financial situation strengthens out, your marriage strengthens out, things get better, things get pretty good. Then if you keep them more strictly, if you do your best and you keep pretty good intentions, then you reach a stage like "surprising".

The first one you can call "improving". Second one you can call "surprising". "Surprising" means your husband comes home and gives you candy and roses for the first time in ten years, like wow, I didn't expect that. Or the boss calls you and says you've got a 60 cent raise instead of a 50 cent raise. And you're like, wow, this cheapskate's really.... of course, by that time you wouldn't say that kind of stuff. But it's what I call "surprising." Then you get into the realm of what I call "amazing." "Amazing" is like somebody calls up and says, I have a \$3 million dollar property and I want to give it to you for \$1, is that okay? Know what I mean? And you say, okay. And then you get into what I call the "impossible," or "miraculous," like totally miraculous stuff happening, like totally amazing stuff happening, like you have a rosary on your neck and then you do some heavy practices and your friend calls you and says, I don't know, I have this rosary around my neck, I don't remember where I got it, and your rosary's gone. And you say, what were you doing last night? And he says, I was practicing this special Vajrayogini thing. Things that aren't supposed to happen, things that are clearly impossible by the normal rules of things.... you go through those stages.

So I'd say that if a person kept their vows well, there's no problem that after a while they could walk, or even that the effects of polio could be reversed, no problem. The idea of a man walking on water is accepted, it's a {sepa kandikidzin?}, it's a special kind of concentration, it's the karma of a special kind of concentration, and you can do it, it's no big deal. On the level of miracles, yeah, people could walk, it's not a problem at all.

Physically, what's happening? It's explained in tantra. The improvement in your mental view, your worldview—if you hold the sixth long enough—strengthens certain special channels in your body and then certain energies work that weren't working before. If you keep it up long enough, it begins to affect your physical body, and eventually it transforms your physical body completely. You become a tantric angel. It's a very cool process. So this whole idea of going to heaven, becoming a deity, is totally true, and everything you ever hoped for when you were a kid, when you heard about heaven and Jesus and religion and all that stuff, it's all possible. All those stories are true. They just didn't give you the data that you needed. A few more questions... we'll go to 8:30 and then we'll take a break. Yeah?

[student: Can you address the reverse of that situation? If somebody does everything just letter perfect and then [unclear]]

Yeah, he's talking about the theoretical... suppose someone's really keeping their vows well and then a disaster happens to them. What's happening? This is a principle of... Jesus said this thing, someone showed me the New Testament, a Christian guy that I knew in Thailand showed me this place where Jesus says, you don't get... I don't remember... lemons from orange seeds, or something, and you don't get... what he was trying to say was {gyu tu}, {gyu tu kyi dewa} means whatever the content of the action is, you must get similar content out. Crap in, crap out. Good stuff in, good stuff out. Impossible to happen any other way. It's impossible ethically to have a bad result from a good action. Totally impossible. Conversely, it's impossible to get a good result from a bad action.

So then we take the example of the diamond business, which is dear to my heart. I was in the diamond business for 15 years. The boss tells you, this diamond's worth \$500. Go out and tell this guy that it's worth a \$1000. If they buy it, I'll split it with you. And you say, okay, I'll go out and lie for you. And you go out with this \$500 diamond and you say, I've got to get a \$1000 for this, I won't take less than a \$1000. And the person looks in your face, and you know, you're Michael Roach, you can hold your face really well [laughter], and they say, Michael Roach wouldn't lie to me. Okay, \$1000, deal, mazal. And then they give you the \$1000. You run back in and split the money with the boss. Has a lie produced money? [laughs] [laughter] This is better than the Robot Claws thing. Robot Claws says, lie and you get money. Why? Because it worked yesterday. I lied and I got money. Let's try it again today. Does it work? According to Buddhism, according to the laws of karma, it cannot be working, that's impossible. I draw it like this. And this has big significance in your life. Here's the \$500 profit. Here's the lie. And what they call illusion in Buddhism, or deceptive reality, is this: that the lie seems to be producing the \$500. And you take it that way, you believe that, and based on that, you suffer. What's really causing the \$500? Generosity before. Giving produces \$500. So what's the lie really producing?

[student: [unclear]]

This is very interesting: nobody will believe me. And this is a lie. That doesn't exist, that's false, there's no such thing going on, oh, but they happened one right after the other? [laughter] So? See what I mean? By the way, there's an extremely simple proof that this doesn't cause this. What is it?

[student: It doesn't always work.]

It doesn't always work. It's so simple that humanity never got it. It's so simple that everyday in your life you overlook it. *This* does not cause *that*. There's no relationship between these. People say {ken, ken, ken}. Lamas teach {ken}. Oh, but this acts as a factor of the \$500. Bullshit! No such thing. A lie cannot produce a good result. Impossible. It cannot contribute to a good result. Forget it. That's a dharma rumor. A lie can only give you trouble. And giving can never give you anything but money. Start to live like that and watch the fireworks. You can move up from surprising, to amazing and into miraculous, and then it's like, wow, this stuff really works. This guy said to me, Geshe Michael, this stuff really works. [laughs] That's the whole point! It's amazing. It's really cool. And it's because things are empty. It only works because things are empty. If the

Independent School was right, if the pen had anything coming from it's own side, then we're in trouble, then this whole shtick doesn't work. But the fact is that everything's empty. Therefore you must be moral, ethical, it's very cool. Why did Lord Buddha spend fifty years... twenty-five years teaching ethics and twenty-five years teaching emptiness? Is there some connection here?

[laughter] Know what I mean? [laughs] And people don't get it, people don't teach it. Of course there's a connection. That's the whole point.

[student: Then why do all those things for Lama Zopa?]

Oh, we're going to get into that. What's the best thing to do for Lama Zopa? We'll do that after the break, because it's very important to do it. Yeah?

[student: So I see people who improve their lifestyle from a moral standpoint and I see them improve their physical aspect and look younger. Why is it that we don't see, here and there or around the world, people like Methuselah who are still [unclear] in their twenties and that sort of thing?]

It's a very good question. We talked about it in San Francisco. If you weren't there, here's the answer. He says, if your shtick is correct, if what you said is right, if people can practice {dzogrim} and suddenly get younger and turn into deities, how come we didn't see any? Not even the National Enquirer has reported it, [laughter] much less the New York Times. Really, there's been no credible report in my personal experience of anyone doing it, not even among the Tibetan lamas in India or anything like that. I've personally been in Sera many years and never bumped into a lama who was full of golden light who said, gee, it works, try it. [laughter]. So what's going on?

You have to understand how miracles work. I count that as a miracle. Walking on water and seeing your body change into a deity's body is a very similar thing. How come this is not a pen? How come this has never been seen as a pen? How come nobody can see this as a pen? Now I'm a dog, okay? [laughter] There's no pen, I don't believe in pens. I never heard of them. None of my dog friends have told me about pens. [laughter] It's very simple. It's profound. The point is this: how many worlds are going on in this room right now? According to anybody, forget Buddhism. There's two separate realms going on right now, it's very interesting. There's an animal realm running parallel to a human realm. Why? Because Wolf was at the door, Wolf saw this room. Wolf looked into the room. I gave him a cookie and he's staring at me. Simultaneously, an animal realm and a human realm are operating parallel universes in this very {gomba}. Sounds like Carlos Castaneda and all that. [laughs] Parallel universes. Like there was a dog realm...an animal realm and a human realm coexisting, running parallel at the same time. Are you in the animal realm?

[student: No.]

No, you're in the human realm. But were they in the same place? Yeah. And Wolf is oblivious of your realm, and you're pretty oblivious of his realm. See what I mean? He's not experiencing this realm at all as a human realm, but it's in the same place. The principle about becoming a deity is the same thing. The trick is that karma is always personally collected and personally experienced. This is a principle of karma. I can't collect karma for you and you can't collect karma for me.

Prove it. The proof is very simple. The Buddha is the ultimate compassionate being. If anybody's got Bodhichitta, he'd better have it. If he's not willing to loan you some good karma... why are you still here? If karma could be transferred, you wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be here in this crappy realm. This realm is a mistake. [laughter] I'm not kidding. This desire realm is a mistake. It's due to problems.. .it's due to mistakes that you and I made that this realm exists at all. This is a temporary... screw-up. I almost said something else. [laughter] My lama told me to stop using four-letter words in the classes. This realm is a temporary mess-up, but it will be empty. People will learn wisdom and there won't be this realm anymore. But in the meantime, a deity realm can run parallel to a human realm in the same way that a dog realm runs parallel to a human realm and the fact that you are not aware of a deity realm doesn't prove that it doesn't exist.

Can I prove to you that it does exist? Only logically. But at some point you can see it. So the thing about a miracle is that you have to be really good to do a miracle. Your vows have to be really clean for you to walk on water. And you can. Sometimes I get tempted. I say, I'm going to check to see if my vows are that good yet. [laughter] I've actually done that. And I just go down. [laughter] So at our level... but it's possible to walk on water. To walk on water, your vows have to be really clean. That's one level of morality. What does "clean" mean? Do you have to be saving thousands of beings and things like that? You have to be washing the dishes with joy, you have to be nice to other people, you have to be opening the door for people, you have to be picking pens off the floor that somebody might slip on, you have to be trying not to lie about using the phone at work, "all sentient beings" for you is the people you live with, and your morality could be perfected in your kitchen, because that's where it's going to happen. And that's going to be the first room in your Buddha paradise, okay. [laughs] [laughter] It's very cool.

So anyway, the virtue to walk on water is one thing. The virtue to see someone walk on water is very close to that. What I'm saying is that to see the person next to you who turned into a tantric deity three years ago, to suddenly become aware of it, requires almost as much virtue as having it happen to yourself. Rome wasn't built in a day, and tantric paradises aren't built in a day. You start to have flashes. Things start to happen. You go through those stages of surprising, amazing, miracles. Somebody says something to you. You were just thinking of your lama: my lama was really irritating today. I can't believe he'd ask me to do that thing, take out the garbage or something. Then you're walking down the street and somebody says, do you have a problem with taking out the garbage or something... and you're like.... and you keep walking, and then half-an-hour later you realize what happened. And you're like, wow, that's a weird coincidence. And then coincidences like that start happening more and more, and it means that you're starting to purify your world, and then it goes from surprising to amazing to miraculous. Then people start coming out and saying, I really appreciate the offering you made to me last night at Vajrayogini tsog. It was really tasty. Then they just walk on. [laughs] Somebody you never met, some old woman [laughter] walking down Second Avenue, and you're wondering, did I hear that or what? Know what I mean? Stuff like that. And it's your world starting to... what I'm saying is that you don't just suddenly wake up and pop into a Buddha paradise. It's a purification process. All right, take a break and then come back in five-ten minutes and we'll do a short Mahamudra.

Mahamudra Meditation

Okay, we'll do a brief meditation.

Watch your breath. Be very very silent, very very quiet.

Take refuge. We're going to take refuge in emptiness as a way of fixing our perception of Lama Zopa and his health. Take refuge in emptiness for that and we'll talk more about it.

Think about Bodhichitta, especially if someone you know is having a problem. Think about them, think about helping them.

Ask your lama to come.

Mentally bow down to your lama by thinking of some really beautiful quality they have.

Make them a beautiful offering. The one that pleases them the most is your practice and the highest practice is to really struggle to understand emptiness.

Try to think of the worst thing you've done since you've last meditated. Maybe it was a thought. Play it back to yourself like a VCR. Play it back two or three times and you'll see how unnecessary it was and how much it hurt you.

Then rejoice in the best thing you've done in the last few hours. It's got to be hearing number six, I think.

Ask for teachings, and ask for the ability to understand teachings.

And then pray that holy beings stay in your life, stay close to you.

Go back to your breath.

We're going to practice worldview number five and worldview number six. These two are better done with a problem. So focus on a problem. We're going to take Lama Zopa's health, so focus on that problem.

Now look at it in a {gakja} way. According to the lower Madhyamika school, try to practice seeing it the wrong way, that is, that it's coming completely from its own side and there's no way you could see any good about it. Lama Zopa is experiencing it as a bad thing and you're experiencing it as a bad thing and there's no way you could affect it.

Then strip away the {gakja}, strip away the non-existent quality and see it in the lower Madhyamika way. According to them, the right way to see it is that there is a problem there, but we have a choice about how we look at it. We can think that Lama Zopa is testing us, or we can think that the fact that Lama Zopa is trying to show us our own impermanence or something like that.

Try to think of it that way, that there's a reason why he's doing that, and that he himself really doesn't feel well, but that he's doing it on purpose to help us.

Now go up to Prasangika, up to worldview number six. Focus on Lama Zopa's health again. And now, according to the highest meaning of emptiness, look at it the wrong way—that Lama Zopa sees himself as being ill, and that you see Lama Zopa as ill, and that's coming from its own side, so you both must be seeing it the same way. He must feel as ill as you see him as ill because it's an externally real thing, coming from its own side, so he's experiencing illness and you're watching him be ill, and it's the same thing, the same illness.

Now strip away the {gakja}, forget that self-existent stupid idea, and go to the highest meaning of emptiness, which is that you may see Lama Zopa as ill, but that doesn't mean at all that he's seeing it the same way. You're seeing a pen, it doesn't mean there's no bone there, or no golden light there. Maybe Lama Zopa would see the pen completely differently. So understand and focus on the fact that there is no base reality. There's Lama Zopa's body, then Lama Zopa seeing it as his holy body and he's seeing it as something beautiful, young, healthy. For all you know, he's seeing himself as a sixteen year old Tara. And then, from your side, you're seeing your Lama be ill, aging.

Keep your eyes closed, keep meditating. Now we have to talk about the real way to improve his health as we see it, because it's no fun to see a lama sick, and it's downright dangerous to have your lama sick, because if Lama Zopa wasn't with us it would be a total disaster. So try to think of what karma would fix that, and one is all the things that were on the board, like protecting the lives of other things. You see, you're not collecting karma for him, which is impossible. You're collecting karma for you to see him healthy, which is totally possible. You can make him healthy by protecting life, and that's exactly the smartest way to make him healthy, Madhyamika, perfect emptiness, number six.

Then on a higher level, his main nature is dharmakaya, and it's very interesting... when they talk about the five worst bad deeds that you can do. One is trying to hurt a Buddha, and one is trying to break up a sangha, trying to break up Buddhists, split them. They say the first one is bad because it's an attack on the Nirmanikaya, it's an attack on the form that a Buddha takes. And they say the second one is bad because it's an attack on the Dharmakaya, because the main essence of an enlightened being is their sangha, it's their dharma, the very dharma in the world. So if you split Buddhists from each other, then you're attacking the Dharmakaya directly. It would be the best way to hurt your lama's health, it would be a direct attack on the Dharmakaya to have any kind of bad feeling or friction between students, between their disciples. That would cause their health to get worse in your view, which for you is reality. If it goes too far, then you don't have a lama to help you.

So right now we'll do a purification and that will make his health better, and then you should continue it. One way would be to go to someone that you've had a problem with. If you've had harsh words with them, you apologize to them and that would be one way to help his Dharmakaya. But even more important is to mentally think of them in a good way, as being your brother or your sister, your dharma brother or your sister, and Lama Zopa as your father.

So mentally, do a brief meditation, choose someone that you had a problem with in this dharma family, admit it, and then change your viewpoint of them. Mentally forgive them for what they did to you or what you did to them, admit it, and in your own mind, finish it now. And that will be a very powerful karma to help his Dharmakaya. And then later, it's no problem if you verbally apologize also, make up with them. But if you really want to fix Lama Zopa's health, even very subtle disagreements among disciples is very bad. So try to imagine a few and then mentally dedicate yourself to love that other person because the main thing is that mentally you love them. Then physically, verbally, if you get a chance to talk to them and make up, that's good. But for his Dharmakaya, this is the most powerful karma you can collect. And because he's empty, you can change his health. And this is an enlightened way of approaching his health. You can't change his health with medicine or things like that. If they work, it's because you did this meditation.

And then bring that lama who was sitting with you to the top of your head. They get smaller and smaller and face the same way. Then ask them to come down into your heart, meaning, at the level of your heart, closer to your backbone. They get very very small and stay in a tiny capsule there, like a pea. They're like those eggs with the glass front. You can see them inside. They're very very happy. And then this light starts coming out of their heart, and it gets bigger and bigger and it spreads to bless everyone in this area, all the humans, other creatures. Personally, when I'm on the West Coast, I send some into the Pacific and bless all of those beings to have a lama like Lama Zopa.

Then dedicate that.

[Prayers]

Try to continue that meditation, okay?

Sunday Session

Okay, we'll do a meditation. So get ready, blow your nose if you have to, do your coughs, scratch your last itch. [laughter] We did a retreat last week and there were like 50 people blowing their noses. Okay, we'll do the preliminaries. You should always do the preliminaries. So first watch your breath. I think it's helpful to hear the air hitting my eardrums, and then it brings my breath down too. You can try it.

Take refuge. The ultimate refuge is emptiness. If you study refuge carefully, all three of the refuge objects have intimately to do with emptiness. Aryas, or the sangha, are people who have seen emptiness directly. The main Buddha Jewel is the Dharmakaya or the emptiness of the Buddha, and the main dharma is the direct perception of emptiness. So really, the main refuge is emptiness. So think about what you know about emptiness and take refuge in it. It will protect you.

Now think about Bodhichitta. Think about the difference between giving someone money and then teaching them to make money, and that's the distinction between giving people material needs and teaching them dharma. Think about the difference.

Invite your lama/s.

Mentally bow down to them by thinking about one of their fine qualities that you'd like to have.

Make an offering to them, especially of your practice, something specific.

Then think of the most negative thing you've thought or said or done to someone in the last 24 hours and play it back. Just observing how unhelpful it was helps to purify the bad karma.

Think of something good that you did that was virtuous and take pleasure in it. And then after that, think about the great deeds of the great lamas like Lama Zopa, or his Holiness or Khen Rinpoche. Think about what they're doing and take some pleasure in that.

Ask for teachings and ask for the blessings of your lamas and Je Tsongkhapa to understand the teachings.

And then do a small prayer that your lamas stay in your life and that the people who really have a good effect on you, whether they are Buddhist or not, that they stay close to you.

Now we'll start the meditation. If you have to move, move now, slightly. You can do that after your preliminaries.

Then go back to counting your breath. Three rounds of ten is good. The way we count them is that the out-breath is the first half, and then the in-breath is the second half. So it's not like you're holding your breath when you go underwater. Out is the first half and in is the second half. Do three rounds of ten. Try to make it calm, try to make the in-breath as long as the out-breath.

You get to the point where you can hear your heartbeat, and you can time it, like three or four heartbeats out, three or four heartbeats in. But don't force it, never force the breathing. Don't try to force your breath to do something, but try to nudge it that way. If you can, try to hear the air hitting your eardrums and it will take your breath down automatically.

This time I'm going to start real Mahamudra meditation, which means we have to take as the object our minds, and among all the separate functions of the mind, we'll take feeling. Your mind is always in one of three modes—it's either feeling good, neutral or bad, and that applies all the way up to Buddhahood. Your mind will never stop, and your mind never stops feeling. It's feeling all the time. When it's feeling neutral, you may not be aware of it, but it's feeling. So try to capture where your mind is right now. Look at how your mind is feeling. Is it happy? Or is it mildly happy? Mildly sad? Try to get in touch with that object right now. How is your mind feeling right now? It's a little bit difficult to watch your own mind. Try to get used to it.

Now try to be sensitive to your natural feeling that there's some kind of lasting nature to the feeling you're having now, that it's going to stay for a while and that it might not change in a moment. Try to be aware of that flavor of ignorance that you have about your own feelings, the feeling that they're going to last for a while. That if you're feeling sort of good now, it's going to last for more than a few minutes.

Now strip that away and look at your feeling. The feeling that you're having right now is something fleeting, something that won't stay very long, and you'll almost be totally unaware when it flip-flops. Somebody will say something to you, you'll see something you don't like, and suddenly you'll be on to another track. See how short-lived your feelings are.

Now emptiness flavor two. Go back to observing the feeling you have right now. I happen to be in a mildly good mood because I had a nice tea in the morning. Check how yours is.

This is a really good way to look at ignorance number two. Ignorance number two is the ownership kind of mind. You think that you own your feelings, or that you can control them. The Tibetan word for this is rare, it's {je wo}, and it means that you're the master of your feelings, you direct where they go, you boss them around. Look at it in that light, with those colored glasses and look at the feeling that you're having right now and get in touch with that emotion you have that you could make your feeling go either way if that's what you wanted. You could feel better if you wanted to, or you could feel worse if you wanted to—that false sense that you're in charge of your emotions.

Then strip away that {gakja}, that non-existent, self-existent thing, and see your feelings for what they are. You don't own them, you don't control them, you get angry uncontrollably, and when you feel good, it's often just good luck. See that that's the real way your emotions, your feelings, go throughout the day.

Then go back to just watching the feeling. Mine's changing a little bit because my knees hurt.

Now it gets a little more subtle. Try to get in touch with your sense that feelings are happening to you. Like in most languages, the words for feelings are reflexive, they have endings on them that mean that this sadness is happening to me, this happiness is happening to me, like some kind of accident. Look at your feelings with that flavor of ignorance that says, I'm separate from that feeling and that feeling is happening to me, and it's sort of an accident. It's not something that I caused or something that I brought about. I and the feeling are meeting each other randomly. Feelings come up and I'm the victim of my feelings.

Now strip away that false sense and see the reality, which is that you've been brought to this mind, and that feeling has been brought to this mind. You've been brought here to feel it and it's been brought here to be felt by one karma that you did in the past. Karma never misses a beat. Karma is airtight. You never have a feeling appear in your head, with you being there in your head to feel it, but that you did something to someone, or you thought something. It's a perfect ecology, everything is happening exactly as it should. That feeling was created by something you said or did or thought about someone else, and then you're there to feel it and you've created both, you've brought both of them to this head to have this meeting. See it that way.

And so there are no accidents and you always get exactly what you deserve. And you're always having the feeling that you deserve.

Now go back to the feeling. And then get in touch with your judgment about your feeling, like, this is a good feeling, this is a bad feeling, it's a good thing I'm having this feeling, it's a bad thing I'm having this feeling.

And then strip away the {gakja}, meaning the sense that that judgment is automatic or necessarily the case, and look at the feeling again and try to see it in a different light. See that your judgments about your feeling are constructs, they're not inherently correct or incorrect. It's a construct. So look at your feeling again, but this time try to see it in a different light, like: maybe this feeling could be a very useful thing, what can I use this feeling for? I won't automatically judge it one way or another, it's not necessarily one way or another, I could use this feeling for something else.

And now we're up to Madhyamika. Go back to the feeling, just the feeling. See if it's changed in the last few minutes.

Now try to get the sense that... as the lower Madhyamika school would say, how ignorance feels about that feeling. Ignorance looks at that feeling and says, that feeling is out there from its own side. It's occurring from its own side. I cannot affect that feeling. It is occurring from its own side, and none of it is due to my participation. That feeling is independently existing from its own side and whether or not I feel it doesn't depend on my efforts or my state of mind. It exists from its own side. In the lower Madhyamika school, the Independent Group, this is ignorance about that feeling, that it has some existence from its own side exclusively. So try to get that sense. Pretend to have the kind of ignorance that looks at that feeling and says, this thing is coming from its own side and it must feel that way.

Then strip away that {gakja}, that self-existent idea, and go to what they consider wisdom, which is that half of that feeling is coming from its side and half of it depends on how I look at it. This is the state of mind that says that if you do lo-jong, you can transform problems. Look at your state of mind and purposely take it up a notch. Like if you're having a neutral feeling or a slightly good feeling, try to take it up a notch to a solid good feeling. Think of your favorite cookie, or song, and try to move it up a notch.

Now move it up another notch. Think of the one person you've loved the most in this world. Try to picture them very clearly and try to picture that emotion for them. Consciously and purposely move it up another notch.

Then consciously move it up yet another notch. Try to remember the most pleasurable minute or two minutes you ever had in your life. Consciously examine your life and try to find the one or two minutes of greatest pleasure you've ever had and bring your mind up to that.

Then go back to normal. We're ready to go to number six. I imagine it like clip-on sunglasses, now click on ignorance number six, and you're still looking at the same object, so the glasses are still there, but now you've got a different clip-on filter and that's going to be ignorance flavor six. Ignorance flavor six is just about the same as number five, in other words, both the Madhyamika schools are basically denying the same thing, that a thing could come from its own side. So again try to imagine that your feelings are coming from their own side, they don't depend on anything else, that you couldn't change them.

Very important here, try to imagine that your feelings are a product of external causes. Like, whether you're having a good feeling right now depends on what you had for breakfast. Or whether you have a good feeling now depends on whether LMB has a good cooling system or heating system, or whether you're having a good feeling now depends on whether the people around you are being nice to you this morning. That's a kind of ignorance. Try to focus on that. It's what you really believe, that your feelings are being produced and affected by the circumstances or conditions around you at the present moment. And that's why you're having this feeling. Like, you're having this feeling because your body's in pretty good shape today and your back's not hurting so much and you had a good breakfast and everyone was pretty nice to you this morning. That's an ignorant belief. Focus on that.

Now here's the real truth. Strip away that {gakja}, strip away that false perception that that's why you're having the feeling you're having, and go to the truth. And this is the highest truth, this is the ultimate truth, this is the one you use for all your practice of Buddhism, especially Tantra. You look at your feeling as a projection. Remember the cylinder and the pen and the chewable thing? Focus on your feelings as if they were the cylinder, they're just neutral, they're blank, and whether or not you're having a good day today has nothing to do with the people around you, has nothing to do with what you had for breakfast, has nothing to do with whether your back hurts, it's only a projection, a perception that's being forced on you by what you did in the past.

So, independent of what's going on around you, you're going to feel good or bad depending on what you did in the past, whether you kept your vows in the past, whether you kept your ethical way of life, there's no other cause for the way you're feeling right now except the good or bad that you did to others in the past.

And that ends the meditation. It's considered very inauspicious to leave that lama hanging in front of you, so you bring him or her up into the air and you see them getting smaller and smaller and they rotate until they're facing the same way as you, and then they come down on to your head. Bring them down to the level of your heart, just in front of your backbone, and now they're in a capsule as big as a pea. If you look at this capsule from the outside, it's about a quarter of an inch across, or even less, but if you put your mind inside, it's this big spacious meditation chamber, beautiful light, beautiful scent, beautiful lotus. Your lama is sitting in there on top of a brilliant moon disk, very happy with you, very pleased that you're finally getting it right. Thinking about emptiness is probably the highest virtue you can collect, so dedicate it and see light going out of your lama's heart, like golden light, then golden light coming out of your chest and spreading the understanding of emptiness in the world. Then relax for a minute.

One of the four selling points for Mahamudra meditation, as opposed to general emptiness meditation, was that you wouldn't have so much distraction and dullness. It really seems to work. Nobody coughed during the time you'll were watching your feelings. Nobody moved, which means nobody was getting bored. So maybe it's cool to try it. I think you should walk around for a while, and then we'll have a short class and talk about number six some more.

Okay. I'm going to talk a little bit about... if worldview number six is the right one, if flavor number six of emptiness is the right one, then what are its implications for living your life? Is it just something you think about while you're doing meditation, or is it something that has implications on what you do at work or with your family or friends? To me, that's the bottom line. If it's a worldview, it should be something you can apply all the time. And don't forget we're talking mainly about the fight between worldview number five and worldview number six. It doesn't take Einstein to figure out that the last car you bought is going to wear out sooner or later. That's worldview number one. But between five and six it's very delicate.

I'll get you back into the mood of number five. Number five says, half of the reality of something is coming from its side, and half is coming from my side. This cylinder is looking "penn-ish" and I'm taking it to be a pen, and somewhere in-between, it becomes a pen. And that way of looking at reality is expressed in your everyday life by saying, crap happens and I learn to cope with it. See what I mean? So crap is coming from its side, samsara is being itself, in Tibetan they say, {chen yi ten gyur rang gi chen kyi [unclear]}, samsara is being itself and then you're trying to cope with it. Like disasters happen, and then you try to make the best of them, and that's transforming problems into something better, like opportunities. And that sort of approach is based on that view of reality, that half of the reality of the thing is coming from its side, and then half of it's coming from my side, and I can try to make the best of things. Then the sixth worldview, the Prasangika, the highest Madhyamika worldview says, fortunately, nothing is coming from the other side.

It's just a cylinder. There is a cylinder and I'm making it what it is, a 100%. 100% of what that is, is coming from it.

Now what's that got to do... how do you live your life based on that? If number five leads to a way of life where you do your best with all the crud, if number five expresses itself in your life as doing lo-jong, a helluvalot of lo-jong, the older you get, the more lo-jong you're going to need, right? [laughs] [laughter]

So if that's what you do with number five, what you do with number six? There are certain principles to number six. How you act. If number six is true, your behavior has to shift, your behavior has to change. And don't forget that the goal of number six is to remove the crap permanently, forever. There won't be any crap that you have to do lo-jong towards. See what I mean? It's not that you become a lo-jong master in number six—it's that there's nothing to do lo-jong about.

In his patience chapter, Master Shantideva says, kiss 'em goodbye. He says, call all the people who irritate you, get them in the room and say, it's been really nice knowing you. [laughter] And I'm going to eliminate you. [laughter] I always tell people, pick a person at work who irritates you. Act towards them in an enlightened way and you will definitely get rid of them. You can exterminate them and you don't need... postal workers think you need a gun... it's not true. [laughter] Just by acting dharma-intelligent, acting in a worldview number six way towards them, you can deal with this person. I mean, one of three or four things will happen: one, they will suddenly become some kind of nice person; two, they'll get transferred to Kansas or something; three, you'll get your own job and you won't have to work for this guy anymore anyway. Something will happen, or they'll have a heart attack. [laughter] That's not the best way, but anyway, they'll be out of your life, if you keep patience towards them.

There's a difference between patience and the perfection of patience. Patience is worldview number five. The perfection of patience is worldview number six. Big difference. Worldview number five is like, you're the most irritating person I've ever met and I'm not going to get mad at you because I understand that it's a wrong thing to do. I'm going to try to be patient with you and it's really hard. And then worldview number six is like, I refuse to get angry with you because I want to get you out of my life. Okay? It's much more enlightened. It's like, if I can keep my cool with you, then sooner or later, you won't exist in my life the way you are now. And this is the intelligent way to deal... you see? You're not dealing with irritating people, you're eliminating them. It's not like Buddhas in their Buddha Paradise have irritating people around them and they've learnt to cope with them really well, and, you know, they keep them there and just cope with them or something like that. They don't exist in a Buddha paradise. See the distinction? The difference? It's not like trying to put up with samsara, it's eliminating samsara. It's a big difference.

So number six allows you to eliminate samsara, but you have to learn the difference between manipulating samsara with Robot Claws, and doing some intelligent gardening. There's a big distinction between trying to manipulate things self-existently... that's like the equivalent of... remember number five? What did we do in the Mahamudra meditation?

We moved the mind up through...we moved your feelings up a click, like oh, have a mild good feeling, think of the tea you had for breakfast, then move it up a click. Think of Mrs. Amos' cookies, for me, then move it up a click, think of your high school girlfriend, then move it up a click, think of the most pleasant moment you ever had in your life. It seems like you can make things happen that way. Did it work for you? Yes. But did it work perfectly? It can't. You see, you have some influence on how you feel. But you know.... I mean, tell a manic depressive to move their mind up a click. [laughter] It doesn't work. My lama... people used to come in with manic depression and he used to say, just be happy. And they'd go downstairs and I'd ask them, what did he say, and they'd say, he said, just be happy. And they're like, uuuuuuhn. [laughs] [laughter]

You can't do it, you see? That's Robot Claws. Robot Claws means self-existently trying to improve the state of your mind. It's just like the pen. You've got to get used to that. Since we're on the subject of Mahamudra, we might as well talk about the mind. You can't manipulate your mind. This is important. According to worldview number six, you cannot manipulate your feelings in the present moment. Impossible. Impossible. Doesn't exist. That's self-existent fiddling with your mind and it will never work. What's the evidence of it? You can't be happy when you want to be, okay? That's the proof. It's so simple that you miss it. That kind of manipulating your mind, oh, if I had a cookie I'd be happy.... manipulating your mind in the present tense assumes ignorance. It assumes a wrong worldview, it assumes a misperception of reality. You can't manipulate your mind in the present tense, that's what I call Robot Claws. You trying to manipulate things in the present time doesn't work. According to worldview number six, if things are a projection of your karma, then it won't work. You have to plant... you have to go gardening.

Now Americans hate gardening because it takes a long time. I hate gardening. I can't do gardening. I'm not patient enough to just plant something and watch it. I'd rather go to a nursery and buy a tree and plant it. [laughs] Then I have a tree, the next morning. [laughter] It takes some kind of wisdom, the perfection of wisdom, to realize that frankly you can't do much about your recurrent situation. See what I mean? That's difficult to accept. And never forget that thing about the money. Never forget, there's the \$500 I got *after* I lied, but never say "because" I lied. Big difference. I got the \$500 after I lied is a big difference from saying, I got the \$500 because I lied.

We teach a childrens' class in New York and we try to teach them the difference between how and why. Like how did I get the \$500? It happened after I lied. Why did I get the \$500? Because I gave something away to somebody. Giving. And this (giving) is the real cause, and this (lying) is the apparent cause. And this (lying) is an illusion. This did not cause the \$500. Now somebody will come up and ask me, usually, are you telling me that if you had gone out there and not lied, that you would have got \$500 anyway? And I say, exactamundo. That's exactly true, that's exactly the truth. This is a fallacy, this is an illusion. If you're going to get the \$500, you're going to get it whether you lie or not. There's no connection here. There's no relationship here at all. The apparent cause is a {gakja}. There's no such thing. It doesn't exist. Yeah?

[student: [unclear] the time lapse between the lie and what you get from it?]

Yeah, this depends on five different factors: {shi, sampa, jorwa, tartuk}, and within {sampa} you have {kurlang} and {nyonmong}. {shi} means, did you tell this lie to Lama Zopa or did you tell it to Wolf the dog? [laughter] It accelerates depending on the {shi}, meaning the object. {sampa} means, what was your motivation? Did you tell it because you thought it would help somebody, in which case the karma is less, or did you tell it to really screw someone? That accelerates the ripening. What was your mental affliction at the time? Was it strong or weak? Did you do it with great anger or just mild irritation? {jorwa} means, what was the message you used to tell the lie? While you were telling it, did you tear skin off their fingers [laughter], like were you torturing them while you killed them or did you just kill them quickly? See what I mean? How did you do it? And then {tartuk} means, at the end, were you like, all right, I told a really good lie, or were you like, maybe I shouldn't have said that. See what I mean?

So all of those factors determine the acceleration of the result. The process of tantra is to manipulate those factors so that... you have billions of unactivated karmic seeds in your mind, and then there's a process by which you activate them. And the idea is to activate the right ones and leave the other ones forever unactivated. In the Wheel of Life teaching, it's the difference between—you'd know this if you were at the San Francisco teachings—number two, which is basic fresh karma and as yet unactivated, and number ten, which is activated karma. So the idea is to learn how to activate the right ones in this lifetime. There's a priority thing, like planes taking off from an airport. And some can move up in priority if the control tower tells them it's okay, and karmas ripen like that. You can move up the right ones and let the later ones sit on the ground indefinitely. Yeah?

[student: Can you backtrack for a moment? Can you describe for us what the term "lo-jong" means?]

I'm sorry. Lo-jong is this old Kadampa... Kadampa is a thousand years old, they're the first Tibetan Buddhists. They had special tricks for dealing with problems in your everyday life. Like, if somebody screws you, think of them as your teacher. This lady breaks up with you, say okay, I'll take it as an opportunity to go find someone else. Instead of sitting home depressed, you try to transform it into something useful.

[student: A little like [unclear]?]

Exactly. It's putting band-aids on samsara. Yeah?

[student: Thank you. With the lie and the \$500, you're saying that there's absolutely no connection between the lie and getting the money, not even in a contributory sense, or a secondary sense or in any way whatsoever?]

We're going to talk about that. In fact, I'll talk about it right now. It's a very very very good question and you hear people waffle on it when they get to this object. I object to the waffling, and I waffle myself, and I catch myself and say, don't waffle. [laughter]

In fact, it's on your homework, question number 3: "What percentage of what happens to us in the present moment comes from our past thoughts, words and deeds, and what percentage happens from what we are doing now?" Which is to say, what percentage of things have emptiness, and what percentage are self-existent. [laughter] You see what I mean? Where do you draw the line between what you call a contributory factor, and a cause? Where do you draw the line? Is it that this is the main reason to get \$500, and then the lie triggered my getting it? You see, you tend to think that.

That's number five worldview. Dump it. If this triggered this, then this must also have come from past karma, this also is a projection. You can't say that 60% of things exist by my projections, and 40% are these contributory factors that have their own existence from their own side or you slip down to lower Madhyamika. Stay up in higher Madhyamika, okay? If this happens to trigger this, or it happens to appear to trigger this, then that's also a projection. See what I mean? Nagarjuna was very big on that. Everything's empty, everything's an illusion, and everything works, therefore.... there's this waffling way that says, even though things are an illusion—get this, get the difference—even though things are an illusion and even though they're empty, they still work. That's waffling.

What's the real thing? Because they're empty, they work. Okay? Get the difference? One is apologetic, like, gee, I have to say everything's empty, but please, they still work. And the other one is, they work because they're empty. Get it? That's very delicate. This is very hard to live by, okay? Very very hard to live by.

I gave this lecture in Central Park, we debated, a thousand people were there, proved it, and held up a big sign with this thing on it, [laughter] and everybody got it. Immediately afterwards, some guy came up to me and said, can I ask you a question? I said, what? He said, I need to get a Green Card. Do you think it's okay to lie to get a Green Card? [laughs] [laughter] So I said, you didn't get it, did you? If you get a Green Card, it's because you helped someone immigrate somewhere before, and the lie is only going to have one result, which is what? "Nobody believes me." This is this thing... if you've ever been in a corporation, been around a board room table, had 4-5 hour discussions with all the VPs, and there's this one guy there throwing out these brilliant ideas and nobody believes him. Nobody! Everybody thinks he's crazy. Two weeks later, the company's going under and you think, hey, what that guy said was right, but we didn't believe him. Why? [laughs] It's because he lied a lot in the past. This is, by the way, responsible for that phenomenon in your life when you're finally telling the absolute truth and somebody doesn't believe you. [laughs] [laughter]

[student: [unclear]]

I know, yes, because the apparent thing is... Nagarjuna said a very interesting thing. He said the time gap, this thing here, is responsible for all the suffering of humanity. People ask me, can I kill the roaches in my apartment. Apart from my attachment to roaches, [laughter], Nagarjuna would say, and it's in the [bk: Soleka], if as you stepped on them, as you lowered your foot slowly, if your own ribs started to break, would you ask me this question? The world would be perfectly moral if there was no gap. It's the gap that screws us up. It's this gap right here that causes all the trouble.

If, as you crushed a bug, your own ribs started to break, you'd let off, and then your rib would stop breaking, and you'd say, whew, that was close. [laughter] Or if when you lied, and as you pocketed the \$500, you suddenly got a letter from the bank saying we made an error, and you have a \$1000 less than we thought. And if that always happened, every single time, then you could figure it out. But there's this very evil time gap that occurs between the planting of an imprint in your mind by doing something to somebody, and the flowering of that imprint. It takes time. That's why karma takes time. It takes time to ripen. And that screws up everything, that screws up everybody.

Okay, I'm going to go back to this. When we teach the childrens' class in New York, we try to distinguish between the how and the why. So how did you get the \$500?

[student: Because you were generous in the past?]

Well, we're teaching the children that it was the lie. I mean, the lie was the vehicle for getting the \$500, but why did you get the \$500? Because you were generous in the past. You have to deal with the whys and not the hows. "How" describes the temporary circumstances that brought it to you. They are not the cause. The "why" is different. And one of the children had a friend who died in a car. And I say, why did your friend die? And he says, 'cos his head hit the windshield and the windshield was too hard and his head was too soft, and his brain was damaged and he died. And I said, no, that's the "how". Tell me the "why." And then you have to say, he died because he hurt someone in the past. See what I mean? So there's a distinction between the way in which karma comes to you, and why it's coming to you. And you have to deal with the "whys" and not the "hows." And Robot Claws is dealing with the "hows". Like, if we had made windshields softer, he would be okay. See what I mean? And "why", is dealing with: let's teach children not to hurt other creatures, and then they won't have to go through windshields. And it's very profound and very difficult to live your life that way, and if you did, there wouldn't be any samsara. That's the beauty of it. You're not trying to make the best of having your head go through the windshield, which is number five. Number five says, let's fix windshields, or let's make them softer, or something like that, or make people wear seatbelts or something like that. Number six says, teach people not to hurt other people and they wouldn't have to wear seatbelts, there wouldn't be any car accidents. It's very profound. It's very very profound.

So what your mind should be thinking now is, oh, what are the right things to do and what are the wrong things to do? That's perfect. Lord Buddha set forth those three sets of vows. You don't have to worry about it. You don't have to decide what kind of karmas would eliminate seatbelts and car accidents. Lord Buddha already made a list. There's the ten virtues, you can take Pratimoksha vows of different flavors, lifetimes five layman's vows, you can get up to monks' and nuns' vows. Then you can take Bodhisattva vows, and then Tantric vows. So Lord Buddha has already made a short list out of 84,000 possible behaviors, the ten is a list extracted from the 84,000. [laughs] Just stick to these and you'll be okay. You don't have to worry about it. Lord Buddha has already figured out and given you a list. I don't even call them vows.

When I give them in New York to new people, I carefully refrain from calling them "vows". "Vows" sounds like frustrated Christian nuns in a European abbey, overeating because they'd rather be doing something else but they can't or something. [laughter] That's what "vows" feels like. But if you say, here's a list of activities. If you undertake them, there won't be any more car accidents in your world. You have to say "your world", right? If you really believe worldview number six, you will be experiencing Land of Medicine Buddha as a Buddha land, and somebody else might be experiencing it in a very crappy way. And there's no contradiction there, because of worldview number six. There's no contradiction at all that somebody in this room thinks that everybody else is a deity and sees them that way, truly, they're not pretending, they really see them that way.

Pretending would be worldview number five, okay? Worldview number six, is they is. Then somebody else is in this room and seeing a bunch of schmucks. And there's no contradiction there at all, because there's no base reality. Worldview number six says, you're not one way or another. You are as you see it. Does that mean you can see things any way you want? No. We're not talking about pretending, we're talking about actually being forced by your karma to see it as a certain way.

[student: So, when I get in my car, how do I justify putting on my seatbelt?]

[laughs] The interesting thing is this: whether or not you put on your seatbelt, you will or will not die according to your karma. Lots of people die because they have their seatbelt on and can't get them off. Know what I mean? By the way, the indication that seatbelts are not why you don't go through the windshield is that they don't always work. And it's so simple that it goes over your head. There's a homework question here somewhere...

[student: But it's been proved they save lives.]

Ah, now... we'll be there in a second. [laughter] "What is the very simple and obvious indication that the Robot Claws approach to life is wrong?" And then the answer is that it did not give consistent results. If something really caused something else, then it would always cause it. In science, you call it replication. In the diamond business, in laboratories, we call it replication. Meaning that every time you have these causes, you always get that result, and it doesn't apply to this approach to things, to the present manipulation of your reality self-existently, it doesn't work. Whereas, giving... get this—it's called {miluwa}, say {miluwa} [repeat], infallible, airtight, never ever varies. If you give something, you will always get a good result, it will always come back good, you will always get something desirable from it. It's impossible for anything else to ever happen.

Conversely, any time you get a penny, a single red cent of money, it must have come from being generous to someone. There doesn't exist money in the world that didn't come from giving. By the way, the implication of that is that the theory of sharing wealth is a fallacy. Everyone could be comfortable in the world simultaneously. If everyone in the world was generous, then suddenly scientists would perfect fusion, and you could run LA's light system from a couple of teaspoons of water. See what I mean? And things like that happen, don't they?

The invention of the personal computer. That's not a self-existent Robot Claws invention. You created the personal computer. And that's why you're able to do a lot of things that people weren't able to do in the past. You invented them. It's a result of your karma. It's not Bill Gates. He shouldn't get all the money, I think. [laughter]

[student: I have a question for you. It's true you can disprove that lying doesn't always work. But there is no evidence to prove that giving leads to receiving money because you can't tie the events of the past to the events of the present. So is it not just to disqualify the other options, that this option is the one for us?]

It's a good question. What he said was, okay, suppose we buy into your idea that because lying doesn't... and by the way, at a certain point in business, this dawns on you. You may be fifty before it dawns on you, but lying doesn't always produce money. If you're good at lying in your early life, it only means that you were generous before and more of your lies worked. As that karma wears out, less of your lies work later. And people say, oh, oh, I used to think he was an honest guy and now I understand he's not. See what I mean? So John said it's easy to establish that lying doesn't cause \$500 because it's inconsistent. It's like the waiver at the door of the airplane sort of thing. Know what I mean? You don't get on the airplane if the results aren't consistent. If they can't replicate the previous flight of this piece of metal, you don't get into it. Okay? That's okay. But then how do you prove that giving makes the money? How do you prove that? Okay, you've destroyed my old worldview, but you haven't proven your new worldview.

Say {ngun gyur} [repeat] {kokgyur} [repeat] {shintu kokgyur} [repeat]. Okay, {nungyur} [repeat] {kokgyur} [repeat] {shintu kokgyur} [repeat]. {ngungyur} means "obvious", the obvious level of reality, the apparent... what do you call it? The white of this blackboard, do you have to be Einstein to see it? No, you just have to have an eyeball. [laughs] Okay? That's what we call {ngungyur}, which means the obvious level of reality. {kokgyur} means a little bit hidden. By the way, into the category of {kokgyur} we put emptiness. Emptiness is considered difficult to perceive. To see {ngungyur}, all you need is your sense organs or something like that. To see {kokgyur's} you must use logic, on a beginning level. When you get higher, you can see emptiness directly. But before that, you have to go to these dumb classes with this dumb guy and hear it over and over again and he has to prove it a thousand ways and you have to think of it and {ripo taye de gone} means "prove it a thousand ways". You need somebody to convince you and talk you into it and prove it... that's the only way you can see emptiness at a beginning level. You can't see that level of reality... it's beyond the pale of the normal eye. You need logic. You need the eye of logic. That's why they draw this eye on the deities. Now {shintu kokgyur} means "very", "extremely", extremely {kokgyur}. There's something even more difficult to see than emptiness, and that's the connection between these two. {jinpay long chu chun gi de}, the subtle workings of karma are more difficult to perceive directly than emptiness.

So how are you supposed to live by it if no one can prove it to you? See what I mean? There's a process... first of all, logic. Like you hear it explained enough. You take the course on karma and you understand how karma is planted. That's a "level A" way to prove it. You can't prove it with your eyes. You can smash all the roaches you want, check your ribs, they're still there. You can't see that with your direct senses, it's not ever going to happen.

That's why samsara is so endemic, that's why it keeps going on, because it's just not obvious, it's not {ngungyur}. So {gotu kokgyur}, you can prove it logically, you can teach somebody about karma, teach somebody how the mind works and then, on a higher level, we call him an "authoritative person", you find a person that you believe. Now that can be very dangerous and you know that. Just to believe what a person says is discouraged in Buddhism. Buddha said: don't accept what I say just because I'm Mr. Buddha. Go prove it to yourself. But on a certain level, the process is logical. You prove that this person is someone who doesn't tend to lie. You prove that Lord Buddha is a person that you can probably believe what he said.

How do you establish that? It's very beautiful in scripture and I love it, I buy it. Only the Buddha described our suffering accurately. Out of all the people you ever met, everyone's like smiling, like the doctors who lie to you, oh, everything will be all right, it's not so bad. But then your own experience tells you that every good thing you get tends to collapse, over and over. And then at some age, some people get it at 20, some people get it at 30, some people never get it. You just get tired of it. Then you say, things just don't work the way the New York Times says they do. There isn't anything in my life that's steady or lasts or doesn't get worse. There's got to be some other option. Then you read this Buddhist book and this guy is saying, things start to collapse when they start. The beginnings of things destroys them. And you say, wow, this guy knows what he's talking about. What else has he got to say? And then you get to the karma part. That's the classical answer to that.

Personally, try this way of life for a while, see if you don't start getting that experience of surprising, amazing, impossible. Know what I mean? The kind of things that start happening to you. I'd say do that. And my argument is that you have nothing to lose. You're dying anyway. You're going to lose everything you have anyway. You've experienced that, you know that, you can confirm that. You need a radical change in your worldview. I say, try it. And then the final proof is that you get results. You say, wow, this works. And then you know that you're on the right track. And I say that six months of being strict with your book, tundruk.... not saying {unclear}, that's not {tundruk}, just to mutter something twice a day... twice a day? I thought it was six times a day. [laughs] Just to mutter something quickly... that's not {tundruk}. {tundruk} means stop, six times a day, every two hours, check the next vow that you have. Do that for six months sincerely. I have this new class of students that's developing. Did you do your book? Yes. Do you take your vows six times a day? Yes. Do you think about it? No. [laughter]. It's like, how fast can I finish this? I told Michael Roach I'd do it. They don't really search their hearts. They just try to find something they can write within five minutes because they've got to get to the dentist or something.

Anyway, that to me is the answer. Try it for six months and some amazing things will happen. And I'm talking on the order of very very weird stuff starting to happen. Like literally people handing you a million dollars. Or bumping into Vajra Yogini on Second Avenue or something. I'm talking on that level. I'm really talking on that level. And isn't that what you always wanted from your religion? [laughter] All right. Oh, where does this theory lead to in your real life? I want to talk about what's called an "act of truth". Gandhiji was very good at it. In Sanskrit it's called "satyachara", it's an act of truth. And I think that once you buy worldview number six, you're going to have to be doing acts of truth rather frequently. I'm going to describe an act of truth.

An act of truth is this: Gandhi wants to liberate India from the British. So he's trying to figure out the best way to do it. His friends are saying, let's plant bombs under their trains, let's shoot British officers from the tops of buildings, and let's see if we can do it that way.

And he's saying, no, the way to overcome violence is non-violence. Like if you want to remove... they're talking number five worldview, right? Like shoot enough British officers so they go away. And Gandhiji's talking worldview number six. It's very beautiful and that's the difference.

Worldview number six says, if I am actively, consciously, purposely, purely non-violent long enough, violence will go out of my life. If I am purely, consciously, purposely, informedly—with perfection of wisdom, right, which means informedly—if I'm patient with this guy at work long enough, I can exterminate him. That's the worldview.

So Gandhiji is saying, you want to get rid of violent people in your life, meaning British overseers, then just practice non-violence purely. This is an act of truth. So, you see the movie, right? These guys are walking up to the salt place and he's sending guys up in threes to stand there so the British soldiers and their workers can just beat them and break their heads and then they fall down and then the next guy comes up and they... but they're strictly purely non-violent. This is the way to liberate India according to worldview number six. It's very interesting. Very very interesting. It's an act of truth. It's the truth of what he's doing. It's the truth of understanding emptiness perfectly that allows him to do the right thing. That's the only way to liberate India, get it? Like you walk up and let them hit you. In apparent reality, is that a good idea? It's very dumb. I'm sure there were followers who were like, you sure you want to do that? [laughter] What I'm saying is that if you buy into worldview number five, then standing there and letting them hit you is very stupid. If you buy into worldview number six, that's the only thing you can do.

So we talk about acts of truth, meaning that in the short run, in your life, it's very very trying, it's very hard to live this way. It seems like just a white lie will make everything all right. And to refuse to lie at that moment, to hold the {tsim tsam}, which means to hold that line of your worldview and say, a lie cannot produce a good result. Even in this circumstance, when it seems that a lie would be useful or beneficial, I refuse to lie because I have the perfection of wisdom. I know that it will not cause what it appears to cause. It's very difficult to live that way. You're constantly having to tell your boss the truth. But what you'll find is that the other behavior was causing you suffering, your samsara, and this new behavior—by the way, you have to do it with knowledge, perfection of wisdom, and not because you grew up in Burma and your mom said, Johnny, it's bad to kill bugs. You do it because you understand emptiness. You don't have to wait very long to get results. See what I'm saying? Like you tell your boss the truth three times when you didn't feel like it, and suddenly you're a Vice President. It's very weird, but the degree of knowledge with which you do it is everything. If you do it half-heartedly, because Michael Roach told you to do so, you're going to be back to white lies to your boss within a week. If you do it because you understand emptiness, you'll be a V.P. in six months. [laughs] [laughter] Okay?

[student: What about a situation where you're in a conference room with your boss and a third person, and your boss is saying something which you know is not true, he's falsifying what you think reality is so that this third person [unclear], what's the appropriate behavior?]

What's the appropriate behavior if you see someone else lying? What should you do then? You have to judge the circumstances. One thing about morality is that it's personal. In other words, we go back to worldview number four, I think it was. You can't really judge why someone else is doing something. The appropriate thing to do would be to take them off afterwards, try to convince them of how counterproductive lying can be and then ultimately, if they have the patience and the time, explain to them worldview number six. Okay? [laughter]

But it's not going to work all the time. I mean, in that level, you have to try to encourage the person... try to point out to them how life, I mean, sooner or later, lying is just impractical, in business or in anything else. Sooner or later you have to lie to another person because you lied to this one, and then you have to remember which story you told this one, and then sooner or later, people don't believe you. Know what I mean? So that's all you can do. But it's important to judge the lie and not the person. You cannot judge their state of mind. Unless you can read their mind clearly, you can't judge them, you don't know what they are, who they are, but you can judge the action and you can say, I don't think you should have told a lie in this case.

[student: So I can speak to the boss afterwards, but what responsibility do I have? I mean, for the lie being made in my presence?]

I would say this: if you're being called upon to participate in the lie, you'd say... all right, that's a classic example, okay. Like if you refuse often enough to participate in a lie, you're going to get demoted or something. Question: did you get demoted because you failed to participate? You've got to stop thinking that way. [laughter] It's very hard. And then your Independent Group, Madhyamika school mind wants to say, yeah, but it's a factor. Know what I mean? If I had just kept my mouth shut a little bit I wouldn't have got demoted. [laughter] That's the "50% of the things in the world are empty and 50% are not" state-of-mind. See what I mean? And you hear people teach that. It's very delicate. You have to realize that there's nothing that's not empty. You can't go 50%, okay? Get out of that state of mind. I'll say it again. If you go to your boss and say, I understand that this is a corporate lie... like don't tell Macy's that Sears is getting it for 10% less and if Macy's asks you, lie, that's the policy of the company. And you say, I can't do that. Then they say, okay, you stay down in the third floor of the factory. You can't be in the executive offices any more. And you say, okay. But going to the third floor is not related to not participating. You've got to get used to that. That's not true. If your karma was pure enough, you'd be on the executive floor whether you lied or not. You've got to get used to that. And it's hard, I'm not saying it's easy. It's very hard. It's really hard. But in the long run, it's gardening rather than Robot Claws. With Robot Claws, the results are unpredictable and crazy because that's not what's happening. Yeah?

[student: [unclear] Mahamudra is meditating on your mind. Maybe I never understood it correctly, but I always thought that [unclear] meditating on that your thoughts were projections, [unclear]]

We're going to get that in the next class, okay? I'm saving that for the last class. Yeah, Janice?

[student: [unclear]]

Okay, Janice is asking about how blessings work. Why does the Dalai Lama bother to touch people on the head if nothing can happen that way? It's basically a question of why tantra works. That's asking the same thing. And tantra is a very interesting example. Tantra is a case of almost instant karmic results. That devotion and the belief, unwavering, totally unwavering devotion and belief in your lama, the karma of that is enough to create karmic results instantly, or nearly instantly. The object is so intense and the emotion is so intense, and if you do it with knowledge, with what I've been describing, you can have results happen in a matter of months or years that normally would take eons. See what I mean? So the reason someone can get a blessing from the Dalai Lama has nothing to do with him. It's their devotion in him.

Why do {sumdus} work? Why wear a piece of string around your neck to keep yourself out of a car accident? If that really worked, I'm sure it would be all over the world by now. If it were well-known that Buddhists never went through windshields [laughter] and everybody would become a Buddhist. It only works if you have devotion and belief in the lama who gave it to you. It's very interesting. And it's not the string, it's the good karma of the devotion that makes it work.

Someone wrote me this letter saying I can't believe you destroyed my belief in tonglen because you proved it didn't work. And I said, no, I proved why tonglen did work, which isn't why you thought it worked, okay? It doesn't work because you're sending good thoughts to somebody or something like that. The karma, the virtue of the good thoughts, makes you become an enlightened being who can truly help people, and that's all.

So to answer your question, if you give a group of a hundred people penicillin and you give another group of people who have the same disease placebos, then according to this theory, the number of people in each group who get cured should be the same, right? Meaning, that's what you're saying, right, Michael Roach? And this is the interesting thing: if you have the karma to have the money to go to a good doctor and get treated, you also have the karma more likely to be cured. Get it? See what I mean? It's a good karma to have the money to go to a better doctor, and what it means is that it's a pattern of karma. It's not that the good doctor cures you more likely than the bad doctor. It's that the karma to be a person who has the money to have a good doctor is of the same pattern as the karma to be cured by that person. Get used to the idea that it's not the better doctor who's curing you. So does it make sense to go to a better doctor? Yes. Does the better doctor cure you? No. You've got to get used to that, it's hard, very hard. Question for you: does penicillin work self-existently?

[student: No.]

No. Why? Prove it!

[student: Because if it was, it would work all the time.]

Exactly, exactly. Does penicillin work more often than no penicillin?

[student: Yes.]

Yeah. Will penicillin always work that way? Very interesting, very interesting, the efficacy, the ability of penicillin to cure is changing in the world as we speak. Is that self-existent? No. It's the karma of the people who are getting it. Was it just that the people in the 17th century were stupid and couldn't figure out penicillin? No. It didn't start working until the 20th century. Get it? [laughter] It wasn't the karma... otherwise, penicillin works from its own side and in the 21st century, it would work as well as in the 20th century. See? It doesn't exist from its own side. It's a result of karma. Very interesting. It's very interesting. [laughs] [laughter] And if everybody respected life, then chocolate chip cookies would work instead of penicillin, which is my theory. [laughs] [laughter] Okay, one more question. We'll have a question and answer session later today. So one more questions, then I want you to have a nice lunch. Try to eat fast and then your mind will be more clear in the afternoon.

[student: Are you saying that penicillin is better than no penicillin?]

At the current time, given the current karmic propensities of people in the world today, yeah.

[student: So then [unclear]]

Generally, more frequently, because the karma to have a good doctor is similar to the karma to get cured. Get it?

[student: [unclear]]

[laughs] Yeah, if your karma was to be cured, yes, exactly. If you had respected life in the past, you could go to the doctor on the Simpsons and get cured. And if you had not respected life in the past, you could go to Debakey(?) or someone and he'd kill you. Which happens. So you've got to get used to that. And it's hard to believe, but I propose that your old worldview doesn't work anyway. So why not give it a try?

Let's look at the questions here. This says, what's the difference between Robot Claws and gardening? Robot Claws is saying, I'm going to affect this thing in the present time. Now we go to Mahamudra, right? Feelings, let's talk about feelings. How do I get a good feeling to occur in my mind? Buddha said {jinpay long chu chun gi de}. {jinpay long chu} means, want money? Give money. {chun gi de} means, want to feel good? Keep your vows. Very interesting. So does it always work to make yourself feel better to try and remember something that made you feel better in the past. Does it always work? That's a sign that it's not what happening. You can't make your mind feel better unless you've kept your vows. You will never have a feeling of contentment, satisfaction, well-being, peace, except for karmic projections on your mind that are coming from your past of doing good to other people and keeping your vows. It's very interesting. The only cure for depression, anxiety, schizophrenia is to keep your vows. It's very interesting. You can give them this drug, that drug... does lithium work from its own side?

[student: No.]

No. [laughs] Does it seem to help? Yes. When it helps, how does it help? Oh, this chemical inhibits that chemical, and blocks this chemical. Yeah, but why does it help? See? "How" versus "why". Scientists are in the business of describing "how". We're in the business of describing "why". They can tell you "how" this drug works. This blocks this chemical, this blocks that enzyme. But "why" does it do that? Because you have the karma. Because you protected life in the past, or you kept your vows. Give up trying to make your mind happy. It doesn't work in the present tense. You can try to imagine cookies all you want, it doesn't work. The only way to be contented and happy is to keep your vows. That's the only cause. It's like the difference between this, and this. One last question.

[student: So the karma of getting penicillin is close to the karma for being cured, and most executives and very successful people are ruthless, therefore the karma of being successful, which you would think would come from a good thing, and the karma of being ruthless, are obviously connected. How does that work?]

She said, given your thing about penicillin, if you can afford the penicillin, then it's more likely it's going to work because it's a similar karma. Then what about the fact that most successful businessmen seem to be pretty ruthless? Are you saying that the karma to be successful and the karma to be ruthless are similar? [laughs] I can't say that, and that depends on your perceptions also. My perception in business, and I was in business for sixteen years, big business, billions of dollars in the diamond business. The Indians moved \$2 billions a year, fifteen Jain families in Bombay. And my personal experience was that over the long run, the ones who were strict... I mean, people have met my diamond dealer friends in Bombay, the students I traveled with, they were just struck by their honesty and kindness and the really really successful businessmen over a period of time are the ones who are very ethical and honest. I'll think you'll find that if you're in business for a long time. The idea that to be ruthless is how to succeed in business... I've seen many ruthless businessmen go down. Much more often than the other kind. And the ones who were truly concerned about the people in their city—they're building big hospitals in Bombay, and they're helping poor people—they just seem to go on and on and get richer and richer. That's my personal experience over a long period of time. I don't say that there are not ruthless business who seem to be prospering.

The Bible says: why do the wicked prosper? And it doesn't give a satisfactory answer. [laughs] [laughter] And that's the answer. They're experiencing the result of great generosity in the past, and they're setting up the causes for great suffering in the future. And that's all that's going on. There's no connection between the ruthlessness and the profit. Okay, let's stop here.

[prayer]

I think that the important thing is not so much whether you do (A) or (B), the important thing about that controversy is to make sure you don't get your mind into that dichotomy. There's a {pung sumba}, which, in Tibetan logic means, don't fall for (A) and don't fall for (B). Look for the third thing. And the third thing is that our practice is not good enough, and that's why we see His Holiness getting older, that's why people are challenging His Holiness, for the first time. It breaks your heart to see it. It's our fault. We created that situation. So I'd say the right thing to do is to avoid any kind of conflict with other Dharma students. And then someday, if you do this well, you personally will see a great reconciliation. And if you don't do it well, you'll see things get worse, and if you do it sort of half-and-half, like we are doing now, you'll see it come up and down. That's my official position.

And then people say, you're not answering the question, and I say I'm answering it exactly, precisely, I'm answering it according to worldview number six. Think about it. That's the way to solve that problem. It's not by taking (A)'s side or (B)'s side—it's by cleaning up your own relationship to your own lama, and cleaning up your own relationship specifically to other Dharma students. And I don't mean that you've murdered any fellow Dharma students recently. [laughter] It's that you don't really respect them or even if you're able to hold your tongue, in your mind you're constantly judging them and thinking, this person's not a very good Dharma person, I'm much better.

There's this article written by Jon Landaw in Mandala that I really like. You can check it out sometime. The point is that you go to a Dharma center because you need to work on your mind. People are concerned—they go to a Dharma center and see other people who aren't perfect, especially in the sangha. I've had friends go to Sera Monastery. I get these five-page letters the first night they're there, oh my god, I saw a monk beating up a kid with a rosary, and they freak out. And I tell them, why do you think we go to a Dharma center? Why do you think we stay at a monastery? Because we need help. It's because we're imperfect that we come to a monastery or to a Dharma center. If you were perfect you wouldn't have to come to LMB.

So I'd say it's the nature of things. The way to remove that problem is to improve your relationship with other Dharma students, and not so much even verbally or physically, but mentally. To really love them and appreciate them for who they are. And then the other thing works out, cures it. It's that roof-leak thing—it doesn't look like one thing has any direct bearing on the other, but it has all the bearing on it. If you want Lama Zopa to get better, that's what you have to do. If seeing two great lamas having a problem with each other disturbs you, which it should, then clean up your own act. That's the non-self-existent way to stop that. Yeah?

[student: Tell me again, I forgot.]

[laughs] [laughter]

[student: What was that again? If my karma's not transferable, or the Buddha can't give me enlightenment, so how can my karma be affecting my guru?]

Michael's saying this: if karma is not transferable... by the way, we proved it, right? What's the proof? I'm not enlightened. I don't know about you guys, I really don't know, I honestly don't know, but I know I'm not enlightened. That proves that it's not possible for an enlightened being to transfer their ticket to me, because they would if they could because they're enlightened and enlightened beings are compassionate. So that proves that you can't do it. The fact that I'm still suffering proves that other people can't loan me their karma. So Michael's saying, well then, how can you say that something we do is going to fix Lama Zopa's health?

Don't forget that Lama Zopa, in my best judgment, is not experiencing any illness at all. You are forced to see him sick because of your problems, and there's no base reality, which is worldview number six. There is no Lama Zopa who is ill or a sixteen year old Tara. He can be perceiving himself in the latter way, you can be perceiving him in the former way, and there's no contradiction there. So you're not making him sick in the sense that he's experiencing sickness because of your bad deeds. You're forced to have the very unpleasant experience, the frightening experience, of seeing Lama Zopa be ill, because of your bad deeds. But that doesn't make him ill to himself. See what I mean? That would be transferring karma. Yeah?

[student: [unclear]]

I don't remember what they were actually. Give me the one that bothers you the most.

[student: [unclear]]

That's metaphorical, okay? The antidote for being sick... the cause was doing harm to bodies of others, and the antidote in the text, it's like poetry, it says, take upon your own body all the sicknesses that come to anyone else at all. This is tonglen. We did a tonglen course here, I don't know when, last winter, when Pat Wells tricked me. [laughs] I should know better. I thank you, by the way. The idea is tonglen. Now does tonglen really work? I mean, can you directly take people's illnesses upon yourself? No, or else we would never get sick. Again, the proof is that the Buddha didn't take our illness away. So what's going on when you do tonglen? Tonglen is the exercise of truly visualizing that you're taking other peoples' illnesses on and destroying it, right? That's an important point thing in tonglen. You don't take them on, then live with them. You take them on then destroy them within 30 seconds in your visualizations. So just constantly visualizing that would start to remove the problems of your body. The good karma of wanting to take on... there's a very famous quotation in [bk: Bodhisattvavichara??], the karma of wanting to take on even another person's brief headache is more than could fill space. Something like that. The virtue of the intention, and not so much the actualization. Or else the Buddhas haven't perfected giving. We talked about that. Yeah?

[student: Geshela, how can I create the karma to keep my book? I've tried for two years now and I've kept it a little while and I've just lost [unclear] I can give you all the reasons why not.]

[laughs] [laughter]

Okay, she said, how can I collect karma to keep my book well? And frankly I had the same karma for a long time. I started this eight years ago or something. I went into these lapses where I couldn't finish it, or I got bored half-way through, or I didn't... you know what I mean? And I had days when I just skipped it. Nowadays what I do with a lot of this stuff is, I get one of my students to do it with me. Know what I mean? Like, on a day that I don't feel like it, they feel like it, and when they don't feel like it, I feel like it. The buddy system is very good. In New York, people do it like this: like if you're not staying close with somebody, then read it to each other once a week or something. It's a buddy system. And a buddy system works very well.

I like food too much. I eat too much. Now I have this thing where I share my food with somebody. So I only get half a plate every meal, which turns out to be fine. Have a buddy system. To have Dharma friends is that. Have someone very close to you that you do your books with, or you ask them at the end of the day, let me see your book. And it works very well. Personally it's worked for me. And the other thing is to tie it to events, like don't eat until you've done your book, then you'll do your book. [laughs] Before I do any major thing, I do my book. Before I go to a meeting with someone, I do a book. Before I open a book to study a scripture, I do a book. Before any major event in a day, I do a book. Those are the two tricks I use. I had the same problem. Yeah?

[student: To go back to some of the karma stuff? One thing is just that it's been a very challenging weekend for me, in the sense that, I have to die, and you can't die for me, [laughter]...]

[laughs] That's it.

[student: (contd. from above.) ... and so I want an explanation... I have to make a responsible decision because I have to die, and so, the things you said were [unclear] helpful. Some of the ways I'm still struggling again, the one with the seat belt and airplane stuff? The principles, the laws of physics do always work, but our abilities to manipulate them and to be skillful... so like the situation is planes do go down, but it's not [unclear]. And seat belts do what they're supposed to do, they restrain bodies, and they don't say this will keep you from dying. And with the explanations of karma, it seems to be that one is assuming causality, which us being Westerners and [unclear] children(?) of the enlightenment [unclear] as experience has kind of shown us, causality is a problematic thing in and of itself, can't be taken for granted. And it all seems like, karma this, karma that. It does seem like everything else is empty except for karma.]

It's a very good question. What he's saying is this—if what I said was right, then planes only fly when you have the karma to have them fly, and they fall down when you don't have the karma to have them fly. And one thing he's saying is that if you get a certain angle of metal up to a certain speed, it will always fly. What makes them fall down is faults in the process, that there's a crack in the metal, or somebody didn't get it up to a certain speed, see what I mean? But as long as there's a certain angle to the wing and it does not exceed a certain weight and you get up to a certain velocity, it must fly. First of all, strictly speaking in the explanation of karma, then you couldn't walk on water for example, you couldn't fly in the sky or something like that.

But let's leave that. Let's leave miracles because you can't really confirm them, you haven't seen anybody walk across the Pacific lately. We'll leave those kinds of examples. But I think that typically, in explaining it, they would say, maybe that's true, but then why does the wing crack? Then you say, because there was a stress fracture there and nobody noticed it on the last x-ray test. And then you say, well, why didn't they notice it? And rather than focusing on the how, you focus on the why. *Why* did someone overlook the fracture? *Why* did the wing break when this person was in the plane, and not when that person was in the plane? See what I mean? They would say that. They'd say that even if the laws of physics are true, invariable, still, planes fall down because something happened within the laws of physics that made the plane fall down. And that's okay, that's not a contradiction I think. Why was I in the plane when the laws of physics were respected and it still fell down? [laughs] That's the big question. That's the big question.

And then the second question is, if it's always true that doing a bad thing to another person creates a bad result for you, then it would seem that the laws of karma themselves are not empty. Because if they were empty, then it would seem like there should be miracles as far as the laws of karma, and then one day, you kill somebody and you get an award or something, from that. And why are the laws of karma themselves fixed? Why does causation itself happen? If you had different karma, would the laws of karma themselves vary? And then maybe a good deed could produce a bad result or something like that. Apparently there's something in the way in which things are planted in the mindstream, like how is a bad karma recorded in the mind? A lot of it is how you see the thing as you do it, see what I mean? Intention. You give something to somebody, and the way it's recorded—your mind is like a VCR. Visually, you see your hand going out, something you like is in it, you release it, the other hand comes up, takes it from you, and then, in your mind you say, I have given this thing. And that creates an impression or an imprint on your consciousness. And then it goes from moment to moment. It's destroyed from moment to moment, but its energy is transferred to the next moment. It's very cool. It's like billiard balls.

So actually, there's a big debate... how is karma stored for so long? They say that it dissipates from instant to instant and then the energy is transferred to the next instant. And then when it ripens, when it comes out, your consciousness is forcing you to organize random data—black and white, colors and a rounded shape—into a pen. And that pen is again a visual thing. The whole process is again something conceptual. And that's why karma is invariable, and you've got to get used to that. Karma is not self-existently a law. It's a law because your perception... it's a projected law also. It's easy to see how a pen is a projection, it's harder to see how a feeling is a projection. And it's really hard to see how karma itself is a projection, but it is, it works within the laws of karma. It also has its own emptiness and it also is your projection. You've got to get used to that. It's not self-existent. But that doesn't mean it has to change. Yeah?

[student: Last spring I was having a conversation with [unclear] Rinpoche and I was in a position of seeing that everything I saw, heard, touched, thought about was the result of karma, and how we experienced it. And he said something to the effect that that wasn't true, that every time I turned my head was not old karma. And he mentioned that there is new karma. I could walk out of here and slip on the floor and fall. And he gave that as an example of new karma. And it stuck in my mind because it totally didn't compute with everything that we've been learning from you. So I just wanted to have some comments about what he might have meant.]

Hmmm... I don't know. [laughs] As I repeat, in Abhidharma Schools, {namin gi drebu}, which means a karmic maturation is inconsistent with new karma, meaning when you have a thought to hurt someone, that cannot be a karmic maturation. That's a new karma that's going to have its own karmic result, but you cannot say that it itself is the result of a past karma. That's the Abhidharma presentation.

Then you go to the [bk: Lamrim Chenmo], which is Madhyamika Prasangika, and it says, karma's have four results. When you kill somebody, there are four different results. One is that you're going to go to a hell realm... we used to call it a rebirth result. Another is that you will be killed—even if you're born as a human, you will be killed many times. Then the third one is like an environmental result—the place where you live is a dangerous place, you have to live in East New York or something like that. And then the fourth result is the habit of doing it more. See what I mean? It's the tendency to enjoy killing, or to be attracted towards killing, or to think killing's not so bad. And so that overthrows the Abhidharma idea of fresh karma. Like you could have an idea to hurt somebody that was not dependent on your past ideas to hurt people. So maybe he was referring to the Abhidharma system or something, but the system of Madhyamika Prasangika is that even the tendency to want to kill, the idea to kill, the intention to kill, is the fourth kind of karmic result of your past killing. So for that state to work by the way, the second one, you'd be forced into saying that your lifetimes have been beginningless. Because any particular lifetime would have had... your bad habits in lifetime Z should have come from the lifetime before.

So what do Buddhas say about that? They say right, [laughs] your lifetimes are beginningless. You've been in this soup with no beginning, because in any particular lifetime in which you started doing bad karma, the attraction to doing bad karma came from the previous life's bad karma. Yeah?

[student: Every little [unclear]...]

No, every single...

[student: [unclear]]

Then you'd be in real trouble, because then you'd be saying that... that's why I put that percentage question...then you're forced into the corner of saying, okay, 63% of things are karmic projections and the rest are not, and it doesn't work like that. In essence, what you'd be saying is that some things are self-existent and some things are not, and it can't be defended.

Now is it useful to teach somebody that? Of course! There's five other flavors of emptiness, in five of the presentations on emptiness, they would say that. If you think about it logically... I don't think you could defend it. Yeah?

[student: If that's true, then you can never create new karma....]

Oh no, you can create new karma, but the tendency to do so is carried over from your past tendencies to do so.

[student: So then you don't really ever change a trend? Like....]

Yeah, no, no...

[student: [unclear]]

What she said was, and it's a very very good question you know, if your current attraction to killing or to adultery or to anything else is a karmic result of your past attraction to it, then there's no free will, and there's also no hope. You can never change the pattern. And somebody was telling me, well, then the odds of getting born as a human would be something like a blind turtle at the bottom of the ocean... [laughter] you know, if this were true, then the odds of being born a human are almost like infinitely bad. And that's exactly what scripture says. From one point of view. But your other question is more serious. By the way, that's true. But the other answer to your question is, and it's a big debate in the monastery, does samsara have an end? {pa ma riche, kola pa ma riche} very famous debate, because it's one of the fourteen unanswered questions of the Buddha. Someone asked Lord Buddha, does samsara have an end? By the way, the word end in Tibetan and Sanskrit, {antha}, {ka}, can mean front end or back end. See what I mean? It's like, does samsara have a front end or does samsara have a back end? The debate in the monastery goes, okay, you're talking front end or back end? And they say, well, how about front end? Let's talk about front end. They say no, there's no beginning. Why? Because you can't point to a moment of consciousness that didn't grow from a previous point of consciousness. Impossible. Consciousness has to come from consciousness, so there was no beginning. So you say, {name tha me reche, dhu}, which is, yeah, there is no front end. What about the back end? {dhu}, there is a back end, {chime cha ye}. They ask why? Because {yombe dhu tha yuve eche}, because there's a very powerful antidote to samsara. And you say, {shok}, and then you say, the perception of emptiness.

So what it means is that given infinite time, given infinite probability, sooner or later ignorance will encounter the understanding of emptiness, and the nature of the two is that one always defeats the other. They can't stay in one mindstream at the same moment. So therefore, logically, eventually, all living beings become enlightened. Because sooner or later wisdom bumps into ignorance and there's a shoot-out and wisdom always wins, because it's more powerful than ignorance. That's the argument in the monastery. I think if you think about it carefully, you'll see it. But the odds of making major progress in this lifetime, if all that I said is true, are very difficult. And that's exactly right, it is. And there's no self-existent blessing outside of the laws of karma that is exempt from the laws of karma for three hours, while you get an initiation or something. It doesn't work like that. You get the initiation because you were good enough to get the initiation and never any other way.

See what I mean? You'd be positing a self-existent... like, a god who created the universe has made a break for us. On Tuesdays, at 3 pm, initiations are self-existently... it doesn't work like that. Either it's a law of karma or its not. [laughs] Nothing is not empty. Yeah.

[student: So, if everything is connected together the way you're talking about, in an endless stream...]

Beginningless.

[student: Beginningless.]

Front-endless too. [laughs] [laughter] How's that?

[student: And the future course of what happens to a person depends on whether they have [unclear] seeds they're sowing now, other gardening, but our thoughts are under the control of our past karma, where does free will enter into the procedure, such that at a certain point you can say, aha, here I go left, and here I go right, and one takes me to hell and the other leads me to seeing emptiness directly.]

It's very interesting. There does exist free will within the laws of karma, like you can decide to turn left or right, and that is your own decision, and it's totally conditioned by karma, and you've got to get used to that. [laughs] [laughter]

[student: [unclear]]

No, you are empowered to make decisions. Which decision you make will depend on your past karma. And it's extremely hard to change the course of your life. Extremely difficult.

[student: If karma determines what you're going to do, then do you have an ability to [unclear] or change a little bit?]

Yes, constantly, within the laws of karma, within the limitations imposed on you by your past deeds. And that's the way it is. You can and will become enlightened within the laws of karma, and there's no contradiction there.

[student: Well, what this sounds like to me then is that you have complete free will, it's just that you have a very heavy [unclear] and you're traveling through your karmic past, and this dreadful [laughs] [laughter] and you can adjust it very slightly, just a little bit, and hopefully, just put it in [unclear]]

Normally, yeah, that's exactly right. I mean, how many people are here, and how many people are there in the United States? Pabongka Rinpoche says that if you get depressed about your spiritual progress, reflect on the fact that you're in a dharma class and that you're literally one in a million, literally, of all the people in the United States.

If this stuff is true—I always say if, okay?—if what I said this weekend is true, if worldview number six works, then you are one crazy person in a million, literally, who thinks it. And to hold that worldview... I wanted to teach you the idea of {tsin tsam}. Say {tsin tsam}. [repeat]. {tsin tsam} means, to hold the line. Know what I mean? To come out of this class and hold the line, to do an act of truth the next time you get yelled at, is extremely difficult. And you're only one person in a million who thinks they should even try. And the odds are extremely low, in this realm. The number of people who hear worldview number six are one in a million and that's you. Pabongka Rinpoche says, reflect on that and you won't feel like such a schmuck all the time. [laughs] [laughter] And I'm not kidding. It's almost exactly that word in Tibetan. When you're feeling kind of depressed, think, at least I made it this far.

[student: Given how extremely difficult it is to do this, given how extremely rare it is to encounter the Dharma in this universe, it occurs to me that why would any of us here go one more minute... [unclear]]

[laughs] [laughter]

[student: Seriously, for months, for years, I've been trying to reconcile this, since I met the Dharma, [unclear]] [laughs] [laughter]

The question is, given that you are so lucky—by the way, I have to repeat the question because it doesn't get on the tape. People hear the answer and they never hear the question. Given that life is so rare and this opportunity is so precious and I'm the one in the million who heard number six, then why do I still go to a 9-5 job? I must be crazy. My views were forged in the crucible of an office in Manhattan and I tell you that my lama forced me to go to work. We had a big fight in the car on the way back from Rutgers University in 1977 or something. He said, you've got to go to work, and I said, I don't need the money, my mother died, my grandmother died, I have money. And he said no, that's not why you have to go to work. And I resisted, for I don't know, for years. And then finally I tried it even though I didn't need the money.

Sometimes I think that people who get to practice Dharma all day long are deprived. You need a laboratory, you need a crucible to forge your worldview, you need it, it's very useful, it's very very useful. I would say, almost essential, extremely useful to be thrown into a situation where you're challenged all day long, to keep your worldview.

On the other hand, in this country, you don't need to work 40 hours 50 weeks to support yourself. So my general advice is, find work for something like 25 hours, 30 hours, that doesn't exhaust your body and your mind. But something which is challenging to you. And my lama was very big on this [bk: Bodhisattvavichara [sp?]] thing like, good Bodhisattvas go out and learn some kind of career or skill that they can use to help other people. So I did learn gemology, and I did learn the diamond business, I did learn how to negotiate. And these are all useful for Dharma. Learn a worldly career which is useful, and then you can put it to use, but don't exhaust your body and mind. I never worked more than four days, and most of the time it was three days.

I say I was in corporate life, but I wasn't really. And I never worked so much that it would exhaust my body or my mind, and I think that in this country you can find another arrangement, you don't have to work the 40-hour, 50-week thing

By the way, that's bizarre. To tell somebody you have to work 50 weeks to get two weeks to yourself. If you state it that way, if you made a diamond deal out of it, you say, hey Joe, or Moishe, [laughter], got a deal for you. What's that? It's great—you work 50 weeks, I give you two weeks off. Wow, thanks! [laughs] [laughter] It's crazy, 200 million people are falling for this deal, it's amazing. Especially because you don't need it. You don't anyway need that much money. It's so funny, in New York city, these guys are getting paid \$80, \$90, \$100,000 a year and they commute... I did it. It's a 2-hour commute each way to your house out in Jersey that you never see so you can pay for it. And it doesn't make sense, it's crazy, it's something weird. So, yeah, find a compromise. But I swear that my lama was totally brilliant to make me work. And that's where I learned my Dharma, really, that's where it all came down, that's where my worldview was sharpened and forged. [laughs] Stick in there... [laughs] They'll come around.

[student: [unclear]]

It's raw data, okay? So now you know, technically, the big difference between worldview number five and worldview number six is how you treat the raw data. What's the raw data? The black-and-white cylinder. Is it or isn't it there? What does worldview number five say?

[students: It's there.]

It's there. And what does worldview number six say, and be careful.

[students: It's there... [unclear]]

It is there, but... by the way, Madhyamika Prasangika makes this big distinction—if you leave it unexamined, just let it alone, [matar mache par] means “without going in”, don't open a can of worms, then you can say it's there, and you're interpreting or imputing on to it, “pen”. The raw data though is there. Now you get to Mrs. Ribush's question, which is, what about the cylinder? And Madhyamika Prasangika says, very simply, when you go down to the level of the cylinder now... before you were examining “pen”, right? Now you've brought the cylinder up to the foreground, and you're examining whether this raw data exists from its own side. When you bring it up to the foreground, it no longer exists from its own side. Then it is an imputation or a label on its two parts. And the big difference between number five and number six is {tanye takpay takdun tselway tsena ma nye}, which means, when you look for the thing you gave the label, if you don't leave it alone and you keep going down levels, you'll never find it. And it's one way to do an emptiness meditation, but it's not a preferred way for new people because it disorients them. They can get into the extreme of saying, well there's nothing there, there's no sense data, there's no raw data, which is not correct. There is raw data there, it just doesn't exist from its own side. That's all I have to say about raw data.

So even colors and shapes are projections. And some schools of Buddhism will say, no, that's not the case, colors and shapes are ultimate. Abhidharma and Sutra schools say, not only that, but the colors and shapes are composed of atomic particles that have no side. And those are the building blocks of reality, those have their own reality, they exist from their own side. Then the higher schools, Middle Way, Mind-Only School says, that's not true. We reject an external object that could exist of partless atoms. That's why they get called "Mind Only." That's why they reject external objects. They never said, this pen is my mind or something like that. Get used to that. That's a western misunderstanding of the term "Chitta Matra". Yeah?

[student: [unclear] equal rights on this side of the room.]

All right, sorry. [laughs] Go ahead, go ahead.

[student: Geshe, I just had a question regarding the why and how framework on the ideas of doctor... does it make sense to go to the doctor? You said, of course it does. Of course it makes sense, but that's not why you're going to heal. So I'm trying to make sense of why it makes sense to go to a good doctor if that's not the reason why I'm going to get well.]

He said, well, why go to a good doctor if you're going to distinguish between why and how? And the "how" is the good doctor, and the "why" is your own good karma. Right? Then supposedly, you could go to a witch doctor and get the same results, know what I mean? And again I repeat that.. it's interesting... the karma to have the money to go to a good doctor is consistent with the karma to get better. More frequently, statistically, on the average, a person who has the good karma to have enough money to afford a good specialist is more likely to get cured, only because a person is on a roll of good karma. See what I mean? And karmically, they're more likely to want to go to a good doctor. So that explains why a good doctor is better than a bad doctor, that's all. But keep dividing between the... but ultimately speaking, you can sit in your meditation room and work on your channels and your winds and get the same result or better, without a doctor. And that just depends on your karma. So you have to divide between "why" and "how". Nagarjuna didn't deny that you should work within the framework of those causes. He just denied that they are ultimately effective. See what I mean? I'll put it a different way. What makes the good doctor effective is your karma. You've got to get used to thinking like that.

[student: That's why it makes sense to go to a good doctor? Because if you can go to the good doctor, then you're just kind of acting on the karma you already have?]

Yeah. yeah. If he exists for you, then he's more likely to cure you. But ultimately speaking, you'd want to get out of the whole problem of having to go to a doctor. See what I mean? Worldview number six says, get to a point where your body is made of light and you don't have to go to doctors, you don't need a doctor. Worldview number five says, try to make the best of a bad body. Worldview number six says, turn it into a tantric angel's body and get done with it. And that's the difference. It's a big difference. Yeah?

[student: Would an understanding of emptiness, because you have faith [unclear]... if [unclear] you decided, because you have some intellectual understanding of emptiness, not to go to the doctor, would that create the causes that are really required to see emptiness? Is it more virtuous not to go to a doctor with an understanding of emptiness, than it would be to go to a doctor... because it says that going to a doctor is buying into [unclear] reality, so if you're able to do it, with extreme faith and devotion, should you make those [unclear]?

Shantideva gave a very clear answer. He said, {sene go chu che da}, begin the practice of generosity with vegetables. There's a principle in Dharma that you stick with what you're capable of. If your devotion is sufficient, and Marpa says, jump off the roof and you jump, it's a great good deed. But if you're not ready for that, you're committing a very bad karma, an extremely bad karma.

[student: [unclear]]

I think when you can do it with joy—and the big litmus test is whether you're going to regret it later, when you're on the ground and he's laughing at you, ha, ha, ha, you know [laughter], and if you can still maintain your worldview.... [laughter] By the way, if you had the spiritual strength to jump, then he would come to the bottom and test you more, like ha, ha, ha, I was just kidding. [laughter] And make fun of you for having your arms broken. But I think we have similar tests all day long which are much more practical and difficult, such as to get into an argument with somebody at work. The question is—do you have enough emptiness knowledge to know that it's going to eliminate them if you practice patience? Is your {tsin tsam}, your line, strong enough to maintain during the whole argument? Or do you suddenly crumble after three minutes? Know what I mean?

And those are much more difficult tests than jumping off a roof. Like the opening lines of the patience chapter. {supa tabo kache me}... there's no spiritual practice more difficult than maintaining your patience with an irritating person at the moment. At the flashpoint. Going into a cave is easy compared to being in an office in Manhattan and getting fired by your boss on a bad day. Really. Shantideva was adamant about it. So I'd say, test your {tsin tsam} out in those situations. Can you really look in this person's face as they are accusing you of something you never did, and understand clearly that you can eliminate them permanently if you just shut your mouth and keep your patience? That's a very difficult practice and requires great perfection of wisdom. And if you do it with the knowledge of emptiness, then the karma ripens very fast. They're out of there, they get transferred, it happens all the time. Students come up to me and report all these supervisor transfers. [laughter] You can do it, just work on it, okay? Yeah. Lady in the back, lady in the back, she never got one yet.

[student: Is there an infinite number of sentient beings?]

There's a big debate in scriptures. They say, first of all, there's an infinite number of sentient beings. Secondly, they will all get enlightened, one by one. Which seems to be contradictory. That's all. They debate it in the monastery. They say infinite, and then they say, there will be a last day in samsara, there will be a last person, and they say that's not contradictory. And it won't take infinite time. I don't know, that's what they say. Did you have a question?

[student: How do you prove that consciousness has to be preceded by a moment of consciousness.? Like, how could you say that?]

This is in "The Proof of Future Lives", ACI Course #4. You can take it. But to put it briefly, the debate about whether or not you have past or future lives did not occur much in ancient India and Tibet. Why?

[student: They took it for granted.]

Right, they took it for granted. Why? Because Mrs. Melvin said so, okay? [laughter] Because their first grade teacher said so. And Kerab Je, in some of his writings, violently attacked the other Tibetans. He said, you guys say there's a past life and a future life, but I've never met a Tibetan who could explain to me why. See what I mean? You just say that because your mom told you that, which is as bad as those people who say, there isn't a past and future life because my mom told me that. And he attacks them violently and says he hasn't met a Tibetan who could explain it to him.

Around 650 AD, Master Dharmakirti bumped into some Hindus who did not believe there was a future life or a past life. Then he took the trouble, in the second chapter of the [bk: Pramana Vartika] to disprove that. And he has very compelling arguments why consciousness has to create consciousness. He argues against the idea that you could make consciousness out of a bunch of chemicals that got hit by lightning just right. See what I mean? He says, that's not possible. And then he goes into describing the contradictory characteristics of mind and matter quite effectively.

We studied that in the course, but basically the idea is that you need a similar substance to create a similar substance. It's called a {gyuten gi drebu}. {gyuten gi drebu} means the same sort of stuff has to be there to create... that mind can only come from mental matter and physical matter can only come from physical matter and they never mix. And then he goes into long descriptions of, look, mind doesn't have any weight, mind cannot be separated, mind cannot be destroyed, mind is not overly influenced by the physical condition of the body. Then there's a big debate. The other school says, yeah, but when you get drunk, you get crazy, so there must be some connection. When you put a physical thing in your body, your mind gets nutty, so there must be some connection.

Then Dharmakirti says, well, when you get cut, your mind should hurt, right? You should black out? They say, right, you do. And then he says, then when boxers are into a big fight and the other guy draws blood, and the boxers see their own blood and get pissed off and they really punch the guy... that shouldn't happen, right? Because the cut should have hurt their mind, and they should be sadder and lose the fight. But, Dharmakirti says, you find these warriors, when they see their own blood they go wild and then they really beat the other guy up. So it's not a necessary relationship between physical and mental, there doesn't seem to be a necessary relationship. It's not true that people who get an arm amputated are 25% less intelligent or something like that. [laughter] It's something like the same physical occurrence of a cut on your arm will make one person faint... like a needle punch can make one person faint, and the other person gets their arm ripped off and suddenly they're an even better warrior, a better fighter, they're inspired to fight more. What's happening there? And there's a bunch of nice arguments like that.

But the basic one is that... I think that in the West we equate the mind too much with the brain. The mind is clear, the mind has no weight, the mind cannot be divided, the mind cannot be located. What's in your refrigerator at home that you can have after this stupid class ends? Your mind went home and saw that cookie or whatever it was. [laughter] And you say no, that's a cute example, but really it's in my head that I'm going home. That's not strictly true. The mind is not limited to the edge of the skin. That's a western idea. Your visual consciousness extends to the end of the room and your mental consciousness extends to stars and planets. The idea that the mind is physical like the brain is a western misconception. You could blow up an atomic bomb next to a person. The body would vaporize like that and according to Buddhism, the mind would not be touched at all, no effect on the mind. And you've got to get used to that. Yeah?

[student: To me it seems that the sun, the moon, earth, water and the elements are emanations of Buddhas and our own bodies are constructed in the same manner. Realizing our Buddha mind or body has to be transforming your fundamental [unclear] realizing that it really does exist, like the sky behind the clouds. Can you comment on that?]

This is actually a question about the nature of Buddha nature, {sugata garbha}, {sanggye kyi rik} in Tibetan. And there are two theories about it. One is that you have a little Buddha inside you like the sky behind the clouds and if you could just remove those obscurations you would reveal your true nature which is enlightened. And that's how Buddha nature is often presented. That's not what the scriptures say. There's no authoritative scripture that says that. What Buddha nature means is that your body and your mind, your five skandhas, your five heaps, are empty. Which makes them eligible for enlightenment. See what I mean? If my arm wasn't empty, I could never see it as Manjushri's arm. How? By collecting very good karma, by keeping my vows very well, as a projection on this thing. So the emptiness of my arm is what makes me eligible to achieve a Nirmanikaya, a Rupakaya, the physical body of a Buddha. And the emptiness of my mind means that someday I'll be projecting omniscience on to that mind and I will be omniscient. So the only part of you... what's the only part of you that's going to be the same when you become a Buddha? Your emptiness. Very interesting. The emptiness of your mind and the emptiness of your body as they stand now will be exactly the same when you become a Buddha. Everything else will be totally different. You won't have blood, you won't have bones, you won't have cancer cells, and you won't have any mental afflictions or any impurities in your mind at all. So the only thing about you right now which is enlightened, the only thing that you can take to the bank with you, is your emptiness, and that's your Buddha nature, that's the real meaning of {sugata garbha}, that's the only meaning of {sugata garbha}.

So that's the truth. {Prajnaparamita} is {Tang ngak} in the {Mundyogen}, {bk: Abhisamayalamkara}, very clearly. But then you go back to... okay, so it's not technically correct that they have a little Buddha inside them and they just have to wipe off the bad deeds and they'll get it. That's not technically correct. Is it useful? Of course. It's very useful. It's like the first five flavors of emptiness. Are they correct? No. Are they useful? Apparently Lord Buddha thought so. I'd say it's a useful idea, it's a helpful concept. Technically speaking, the other one is more logical. Yeah?

[student: What's clarity of the mind?]

Clarity of the mind can mean a lot of things. Originally the meaning of clarity meant the emptiness of the mind. That's all. Okay? And in meditation, clarity of the mind... clarity of the object... how clear is the object? I mean, the word "clarity" of the object in meditation refers to the sharpness of the mind. Not whether the object is fuzzy or not. Got to get used to that. Clarity of the {selwa}, of the mind, in the practice of meditation, refers to how bright-eyed and bushy-tailed is your mind, and not whether the object is fuzzy or not. Clarity in meditation means, do you have the deep state of concentration that you have when you're reading a good book, or watching a good TV show, or listening to your favorite song or watching a good movie? Are you on the edge of your seat or are you bugged out? And that's what clarity means in meditation. But generally when they say clear light or clarity of the mind, they're only referring to the emptiness of the mind.

[student: Is that Dharmakaya? The emptiness of the mind?]

One half of the Dharmakaya is the Svabhavakaya, which is the emptiness of a Buddha, it's the emptiness of the other three bodies of the Buddha. The nature body of a Buddha is the emptiness of their other three bodies. What are their other three bodies? The body that's staying up in the Buddha paradise, the bodies that they emanate in the world, and then their knowledge. And the emptiness of those three is their fourth body, generally called "Dharmakaya", but more specifically called "Svabhavakaya".

[student: [unclear]. Can you describe other ways to go about doing that?]

I used feelings because they're so easy to tune into, and I strongly suggest that you continue to use feelings, because it's a lot easier to access that. There's some fifty other mental functions that you could have used. You could focus on your jealousy, you could focus on your discrimination, you could focus on your attention, or you could focus on the main consciousness of the mind. I suggest you stick with feelings. Feelings are very powerful. It's the easiest mental function to access. I'd stick with that, although you could use anything. You could use your raw attention, your raw awareness, but it's a little more difficult I think. I'd stick with feelings, and by the way, do this meditation for a while, don't leave it here at LMB, take it home. If you don't start tomorrow, you probably won't do it. Start tomorrow morning, in your practice, use it for a while. Otherwise it doesn't matter much. It's fine to go to a class, I enjoy it, you enjoy it, if no one actually goes home and uses it, it's a waste. People who learned tong len last December ask me, should I stop my tong len and do this? I say yeah, why not.

You should have a tool kit of six or seven meditation modules. You should have a Guru Yoga meditation, you should have a Death Meditation, you should have a Lam Rim Meditation, you should have a Tong Len Meditation, a Mahamudra Meditation and you should take them out and use them and mix them up a little bit. Do one until you get good at it, till it's clear, then do another one for a while. And this is just a way to keep your daily meditations fresh, because otherwise they get stale after a while. That fact is recognized by many lamas, like Muchadamabhadra used to teach that.

He'd say, okay, let's move... a month and a half on this one, got pretty good at it, started to get a little stale on it, move on to another one. You can take out another tool from your tool kit. Yeah?

[student: The object [unclear]]

That was a mistake. I shouldn't have mentioned that. I caught myself. All I meant to say was feelings.

[student: [unclear]]

Yeah, I'm sorry, I should have specified mental feelings. Yeah?

[student: [unclear]]

You mean, difficult to perceive?

[student: No, no, but [unclear]]

You're right. But it was interesting to me. This is the first time I ever done this in a large group and I think it worked. I think Muchadamabhadra was correct when he said the advantage of focussing on a mental thing is that your attention span is much better. And people were totally silent when we were in the middle of the feeling thing. I think people were watching their feelings pretty well. Technically you can divide feelings into three, or five. Three means good, bad, neutral. Five means good physical, good mental, good neutral, and bad physical, bad mental. Stick to the mental. Explore the mental.

[student: When you were talking about cognition, and not volition, where volition would be more emotional, which skandha are you...]

The second, which is feeling.

[student: Why is that feeling?]

Sensation's a bad translation, because number three is a sensation, number four is a sensation and number five is a sensation.

[student: But a feeling like....[sound of clapping hands]]

No, it's not that, it's not that. That's number five. That's tangible consciousness. See what I mean? Feeling, in the five skandhas, means, feeling good, bad or indifferent. {tongwa ngoya dushene suma sembe le yi no}. That's Abhidharmakosha first chapter. The definition of the second skandha is feeling good, bad or indifferent. It doesn't mean "touch". That feeling is number five. The awareness of touch on your body is skandha number five, which is consciousness. Yeah, six flavors. In the Heart Sutra, {mik me nawa me name che me lu me yi me rekja me} means bodily consciousness, consciousness of heat, cold, roughness, like that.

[student: Wouldn't that be in Padmasambhava's five different Wisdom Buddhas number two, though? Padmasambhava?]

No.

[student: Who would that be?]

Feeling. That's the purification of the heap of feelings, which is good feeling, bad feeling and neutral feeling. That's all.

[student: Does this apply anywhere in Padmasambhava's Five Wisdom Buddhas?]

Goes in number five as being one of the six consciousnesses. Yeah?

[student: I've got a scenario and a question about it.]

Okay.

[student: The scenario is that a Westerner was very happy in his worldview [laughter] and suddenly he came into contact with Buddhists and was presented with a different worldview. And one aspect of it was creating trouble—that everything is empty was kind of the opposite from what this person was taught at the beginning.

But the Westerner is attracted to it and spends time meditating and learning scriptures, spends time looking at all the pictures, and speaking to great lamas. He practices very very strongly and severely and the mind raises doubts, no, it can't be true, it's ridiculous, it's not so, and the mind is putting up a thick wall because all the teachings are saying, mind, you don't exist. And mind is saying, but I do exist! I am! I'm proving it because I've got this [unclear] [laughter].

So this goes on for twenty years. Finally, at a certain point, with various special circumstances surrounding the individual who's been doing this, the weight is overwhelming and the mind says, okay, I give up. [laughter] It just splits, it takes off, it disappears, it gives up and when it gives up, this huge reservoir of experiences—which have been stored in some other part of the brain and were held back—floods down. And what the brain sees is spirits and deities from other realms, really sees them, and he comes out the other side at the end of twenty minutes, and then 24 hours later goes off into the [unclear] of someone who has seen emptiness directly. My question is: how do we know he didn't just replace one wrong worldview with a different wrong worldview?]

I think in the end... well, two answers, okay? Part of the direct experience of emptiness, part of that experience... it has three parts. The first one is {nam shak yeshe} which means, during the state of meditation, that's a raw communion with pure emptiness and there is no other thinking and nothing else. Twenty minutes long, say. And then you come out of that and for the next 24 hours you have a series of spiritual realizations which far surpass any single one you've ever had before. Know what I mean? Like any one of them would surpass all of the realizations you've ever had in your life.

And those can be grouped into four groups and they're called the "Four Arya Truths", mistranslated as "noble", nothing to do with noble, "Arya" meaning a person who has just seen emptiness.

So those four experiences, all the heavy spiritual realizations that you have in the next 24 hours can be grouped into four categories and those are the Four Arya Truths. And one of these four truths is a {pramana} or a {tsema} or a direct valid perception, an indisputable perception, that you are not crazy, that what you saw was for real. So you have the vision of the direct perception of emptiness and when you come out, you have a secondary realization that what you saw was totally real and indisputable. And at that moment, you lose one mental affliction forever. There are 84 thousand flavors of mental afflictions and when you see emptiness directly, there's only three that you get rid of permanently. And one of them is doubt about this path. Like you can never doubt that what you saw was real or... so that's a confirmation state of mind.

So that person never has doubt again and can never doubt again. They know directly. They saw their future lives, they saw the day of their enlightenment, there's no question in their mind, ever again. But what about normal people before that? It has to come down to experience. You have to confirm it with your experience. It has to coincide with your own experience. Any person's explanation of the Dharma must be confirmable by you. Buddhists are not allowed to use a reason which the other person has not already accepted. The process of Buddhist logic is to present a person with three elements of a logical reason which they already accept. But they never tied it together in that way. Buddhist logicians are restricted to that methodology. You can only use, as an argument to someone, something that they already accept. You're just showing it to them in a new light. It's very interesting. You shouldn't accept anything in Buddhism—and Lord Buddha said it over and over again—until it's directly confirmed by you. Period. If not directly, with your sense consciousnesses, then with your logic. Indisputably with your logic, and only then should you accept it.

Then Maitreya says, what are we supposed to do with all the other stuff that we can't confirm right now? He says, well, you've got two choices—you can reject it outright, which is a very bad karma, or you can shelve it, you can say, I'm going to leave that one for now. I agree with 90% of what that guy said this weekend. With 10% I have a problem. Maitreya says, just to cover your rear end karmically, don't reject it violently. Just put it on the shelf and say, I'll get back to you when I'm ready. And he clearly states that in the [bk: Gyurlama]. That's all.

The ultimate confirmation... Je Tsongkhapa gets into it when he discusses emptiness. This whole presentation comes from Je Tsongkhapa's [bk: changye lekshin nimbo], his discussion of the Mind-Only School and the Madhyamika Schools, and their differences. This whole presentation on emptiness, the six kinds of emptiness, comes from there. And in there he says, we're faced with a very difficult question: how do you know when the Buddha was speaking literally and when he was speaking figuratively? How do you know? You see, in the First Turning of the Wheel, he said, well, maybe some things are self-existent. In the Second Turning of the Wheel, he said, nothing is self-existent. In the Third Turning of the Wheel he said, during the Second Turning of the Wheel, I was waffling. Actually some things are self-existent and some things are not. Basically, it's like that.

So you would think that in the Third Turning of the Wheel, he'd be coming clean, right? So we should pick that one to be the truth. But in that one, when he said everything was empty, he wasn't being literal. So Je Tsongkhapa says, before we get into this subject, let's decide, how do we know when the Buddha was pulling our leg? And then he says, it's obvious. What's obvious? Well, when Lord Buddha comes up and says, you know I was pulling your leg back then, now I'll tell you the truth, that's when we should believe what he said. But you can't do it that way, because in the Third Turning of the Wheel, he said he was pulling your leg when he gave the Heart Sutra, when he said everything was empty. He said, in the Third Turning of the Wheel, which was later, I was just kidding. It's not true that everything's empty. Everything's empty? That means nothing exists? I wouldn't say that.

So if you can't even believe the Buddha when he says, that's what I meant when I said...., how are you supposed to decide what's real? How are you supposed to decide what's right? And Je Tsongkhapa comes down to this: you've got to use your own reasoning. You must figure out what's logical to you, and in the end, that's the only way. You can't even believe the Buddha because the Buddha is being figurative even when he was being figurative. Okay? So in the end it has to come down to reason, it has to be logical. And if you carefully think about worldview number six... I call it "the greased pig worldview." [laughter] It's hard to hold on to that. You lose it. Try to explain it to somebody tomorrow. Like, I'm having real trouble with my credit cards, they're real overloaded. I've got like \$200 left on the fifth one. And I'm getting nervous. This really happens to me, all the time. I'm getting nervous, I don't know what to do. And the person says, what would Lama Zopa say? He'd say, take that \$200, cash it in, give it to LMB. And you'd say, Lama Zopa, let's be reasonable, [laughter], come on...

And to really explain that worldview to somebody, that when you're facing financial difficulties, the most intelligent thing to do is to give away as much as you can. Go explain that to somebody tomorrow. It's like a greased pig, it's so hard to conceive that this could be true. But you have to because it is true. And it's very hard. I tell you, it's hard to live by. It's hard to hold that line. That line will crumble the minute you need something. You've got to work hard on it. The more you hold it, everything you ever dreamed of will come true. I swear to God... or whatever. [laughs] [laughter] It's really everything you ever dreamed of. You can't dream of some of the stuff that happens. It's beautiful, it's wonderful, total happiness and substantial, I'm talking bucks, you know. [laughter] I'm not talking about a good feeling or something like that, no, just total success in every part of your life.

[student: And this is your experience?]

Absolutely.

[student: Which is certainly different from mine. How do I know that that would be mine?] [laughter]

[laughs] Try it. [laughter] I always say you've got nothing to lose. The choice is, read the obituaries. The choice is that. You've got nothing to lose by experimenting at this point. Do we have time? How are we doing on time? We're okay?

[student: This is a real short question.]

Okay.

[student: That last analogy you gave, about the Turnings of the Wheel and what Lama Tsongkhapa said... and the reason you must rely on your own reasoning, your own logic, I would interpret that you be your own work. Like we talk a lot about vows and morality, virtue, your tantric vows, etcetera. For me it boils down to your own word. Living as virtuous a life as you can, thinking as much and as best as you can, as virtuously as you can, and then implementing that in your speech, speech being very very powerful. And no matter... and the part about... I forgot the word you used, your stance, about Gandhi taking that position, and it's like standing in the face of life pointblank, as it hits you pointblank, unwavering, and everyone around you can say, you fool, etcetera, whatever...]

And they will. [laughs]

[student: [unclear] commitments up on the plate or when the stakes are high, more obstacles are going to occur, but it's that... so for me, it's what I interpret, the reasoning, the logic, isn't the knowing. It's beyond that. It's your word in the face.... your understanding of Dharma, for you, is the ultimate refuge, if you would. And I found, in the Dharma, that you run into a lot of shit for that, because it's not about not having respect for the guru, it's not about taking refuge in the guru. It's very hard, in my experience—having lived here for four years, on and off—to find a listening...for you to have a forum to speak to that, to go beyond, if you are ultimately accountable for your word, your reasoning, your being, your intentions. You have to go through so much to be able to have a forum for that.]

In the end, it has to make sense to you. And Buddhism says that wisdom, knowledge, wins the cake. You can talk about "satori" or whatever, I'm not saying it's impossible, but in the end, it's the perfection of wisdom that gets you out of samsara. It's raw understanding of reality, worldview number six, it's the only thing that's powerful enough to overcome all your bad habits. And eventually it does. Just a raw understanding of what emptiness is. It's the only thing. Yeah?

[student: Could you just speak just very briefly on guru devotion and the role it plays? I don't know, the question that I heard from Michael was, how valuable is that, and why and how does that work?]

She said, what's the role of guru devotion basically. On a simple level, as I said, seeing emptiness directly is about as difficult as learning to play piano well, meaning, if you had a good teacher, and you took the time everyday, you could see it. And normally, the failure to see emptiness directly can be related to a failure... either you didn't have a qualified teacher or you didn't do your scales. So in that sense, you need to have a teacher. It's impossible to see emptiness directly without a teacher. It's impossible without proper training to see emptiness. If you do have proper training and you put in the time, you must see it. It's very cool. That's the nice thing about Buddhism. Any normal American person can do it if you have a good teacher and you spend the time.

And it's not some mystical thing that happens to one person in a zillion or something like that. It's just a question on, did you get trained and did you put in the hours, and then you see it.. Like that. So in that sense, in a sutra way, it's totally necessary. In a tantric way, everything depends on that, everything depends on guru devotion. Why? If you want to get out of here in one lifetime, it's the exercise of choosing one being and saying, okay, I've logically established that you are probably an enlightened being. Now just tell me what to do. So I'm not saying you blindly follow whatever that person says. That's not guru devotion, that's stupidity.

I'm saying that logically you establish that this person is most likely an enlightened being. Then to truly commit yourself to whatever they say is pretty much the only way to get enlightened in one lifetime. Then you're willing to take great leaps that are extremely difficult logically. But once you've established that this being is probably enlightened, like you're Einstein and I'm in the third grade. Now, if it was a difference between the third grade and the fourth grade, I could argue with you, I could reason with you, I could figure out why you should do something. But I believe you to be Einstein and I understand myself to be a third grader. And I understand that the only way I can get to where you are is just by doing whatever you say. Because if I try to figure out with a third grade mind why E=MC², it would take me a couple million years. So I'll do whatever you say.

And then there's this whole process of how difficult it is to really do what they say. I mean, you're a third grader following Einstein and they're going to say, I don't see any logical reason for that. I'd rather go do this and they'd say, trust me, I know better. And then to really follow them completely, at that point, is about the only way to get out of samsara in one lifetime, and it's very difficult. And it should not be done until you've established that they're probably an enlightened being. It should not be done blindly. That would be very stupid. So there's a delicate difference between those two. Yeah?

[student: I have a question here in terms of teachers, gurus, Geshes, in particular, you know. I'm struck, and I guess everybody else here is too, by the depth and breadth of your knowledge and experience. If it's not too indelicate, I wonder if you could speak to... is there this kind of standard level of knowledge and education that a Geshe has... where does his knowledge...?]

[laughs] [laughter] I'll just say one thing. In my experience, and as I get older and more mellow, is that it dawns on me that people should have different gurus. You know what I mean? You have to find the one that's right for you. The last course we had in New York, and the last course we had at Sera were about these six kinds of emptiness, and the teachers continually drilled into us that these were all taught by Lord Buddha, that Lord Buddha felt that certain disciples needed this presentation. And then suddenly one day it dawned on me that all the fun I've made of all the other Buddhist traditions was a big mistake—which is, by the way, breaking your first Bodhisattva vow, besides everything else. You must find a teacher that fits your own spiritual physiology. You have to find the teacher and teaching that fits your level at that point, and that's why Lord Buddha manifested in four different schools and tantra. It's obvious, but it's so hard. I'd say it's really your responsibility to find the one that fits you, that exactly fits you. And the real estate is so precious, the mental real estate—you have a limited amount of hours of your life, you have limited waking hours, you have limited leisure hours, you have limited spiritual thinking hours.

Be careful to whom you entrust that territory. To expose your mind to spiritual ideas which are wrong is very dangerous time-wise. You don't have time. Try to figure out very quickly whether this person is qualified and whether or not what they're teaching fits you, and then go for it. Know what I mean? I'd say that. So that's all. Yeah?

[student: You know, the Geshe education which you received, and the other Geshes, most of the time, there's the language barrier and the translation problem, and I wonder, is the breadth and depth of the knowledge of the scriptures etcetera.. in your experience, in what you know of the program of the Geshes, is what you present pretty much what they know from the scriptural perspective, or is the language barrier.. or are we more curious (serious?) than anyone else? I don't know.]

John said, is it typical of a Geshe's education that you have a depth of subjects. Yeah, they do. Every Geshe does, every Hlarampa Geshe for sure. There are different degrees of Geshe. I'm not a Hlarampa Geshe.

[student: [unclear]]

A Hlarampa Geshe, if they could speak English, would be much more likely. But it also depends on the students. I'm afraid that many of them see that the American students maybe are not... you know, they can't, they don't want to overwhelm American students, so they try to teach them more basic subjects. But they're certainly equipped when they come out of the monasteries, the big three, Ganden, Debung and Sera. When they come out, they're certainly equipped with all those subjects. I'm afraid that what most often happens is that either they don't have a translator or the students are not dedicated to put in six or seven years to get the transmission of it. So they tend to back off a little bit, and then it gets to be a habit. And I think it's because of the lack of... I did that for ten years in New York. I didn't demand homework or quizzes. I didn't demand attendance and students didn't progress. And after a while I said, okay, now anybody who misses more than two classes is out, or you have to do your homework, or stuff like that. And then people started to progress much more seriously. So I think that some sort of enforced discipline.... but in my experience, they're certainly qualified.

Then there's the thing, that sometimes it's hard to relate that to your normal life. Fourth chapter of [bk: Abhisamayaalamkara}, Ornament of Realization, says to present it in a way that deals with a person's life is I think... my own experience of my own life in the monastery—and I don't speak for other people,. I can't, it would be foolish—is that you can get overwhelmed in the details and miss the application to your own life. That's a big danger. I believe that could easily happen.

Last thing I'd say is that what people in New York got in that seven year course is every relevant fact that a Geshe learns. They didn't memorize hundreds of pages of scripture but they went through every major concept that a Geshe ever learns, and that's great. Then you have to do the other components which are retreats, meditation, watching your vows, and a daily practice. Without that, the seven years are worthless. Yeah? Are we getting close?

[student: All right, Michael, I've got a question for you. I never get this in any Buddhist book or classes... what is the Buddha's game plan and how does a romantic relationship [laughter] [laughs] [unclear]] [laughter]

Somebody asked me that in Bendigon(?), Australia... we had a great time, we had a really really good time, and somebody asked me that. To me, if you've chosen that way, which is a valid way, to have a relationship, then you can use it as a barometer of your progress. In other words, it's a mini-Samsara if you don't do it well [laughter], no, I'm not joking. Somebody asked me, what do you mean? I said, to conduct a relationship with the other sex successfully is a sign that your practice is good. To have the same old cycle—saw you, was attracted to you, talked to you, got you out on a date, got you other places, [laughter] had a nice time with you, started to see some faults, got a little bored, you turned into a monster, [laughter], I hate you, see you later. [laughter] This cycle—that's a mini-Samsara and has nothing to do with the other person. You see? That's only a statement on the state of your mind. It has nothing to do with the other person. They didn't change that drastically in six months. It has everything to say about your own mental state. Don't blame it on the other person. There's this song by.. what's her name? Alanis Morrisette, "Thank You, India" or something like that. Somewhere in there she says, I wish I could say I could I could blame everything on my boyfriend but I can't. Something like that.

What I mean is that as your vow-keeping gets more sophisticated, those relationships will change, because they are just another part of your life. They're just the same as your body, for example. So if your vow-keeping skill gets better and better by tracking it carefully, then a barometer will be that your relationships get sweeter and sweeter and sweeter and they won't go through the same old pattern. When relationships stop going in that pattern, that's a sign that you're keeping your vows well. And then the ultimate...we were joking in Bendigon... they said, well... you know they talk like that.... [laughs] [laughter].. well, according to that, then by the end you know... I said "path" in Brisbane and they said, what? I said "paath" and they said, "oh, paath." [laughter] By the time you finish, it's "paath". Then, quite honestly, and without exaggeration, you and your mate would become Mr. & Mrs. Chakrasamvara. I'm not kidding, that should be the goal in your mind. The fact that you're not right now is a reflection of your own mental state, not them.

So I'd say, go for it and keep your vows very very very well. And then it will be a big success. There's no problem with that. They will become your tantric other half, and I don't mean causal, I mean result. You will look up one day and see each other as... there's this incident with Je Tsongkhapa. He met one of his lamas... I think it was Umapan, and he said, oh my gosh, Manjushri came here today and Tsongkhapa said, no, you're Vajrapani. [laughs] [laughter]. It's on this tangka. They're walking down the road and one of them is like running away, saying, I saw Manjushri, and the other one's running the other way and saying, I saw Vajrapani. [laughter] They have it on the tangka, I can show you. But it will happen with your mate and that's beautiful. So I'd say that your success in your romantic relationships is a reflection of your own state of mind. And when your vow-keeping is good enough, all these things will happen and they'll be real. That's cool. That's an auspicious place to stop I think. I like that. So we'll take a break, say five minutes, then we'll do a short {lung}, it takes five, ten minutes. I need my computer, by the way. Can you do it?

Okay, we'll start. First we should do a mandala and then a {kyabdro semkye}.

[mandala]

First I'll give you a brief description of how the {lung} will go. {lung} means "oral transmission" of the root text for a teaching, so you're going to receive an oral transmission of the Mahamudra root text that was written by the First Panchen Lama, Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen. He was born in the 1560's, an extraordinary lama, the first one's always... I won't say the best, but you know, that's where the lineage starts, and these are... very very extraordinary lama. Very extraordinary teacher, incredible poet, great emptiness meditator and a great tantric practitioner. And then the words of the text are passed on from lineage to lineage, from generation to generation. So now you will be the lineage holder of this text, next in line, okay? There's a certain responsibility there, that you pass it on to the next person. It's like a pyramid scheme or something. [laughter] So you have to try to do that. Even if not so much the words, then the meaning. And don't let this Mahamudra lineage get lost. I always joke, don't be the dead-end after two thousand years, don't be the person who didn't pass it on. Okay? So start thinking in terms of that.

I know a lot of Westerners who say, oh, I'm not good enough, I don't know enough to be a lama, of course you know enough. If you study the Kadampas of ancient Tibet, it started out just like this, all those millions of Buddhists in Tibet started out just like this. You try to draw a family tree of ancient Tibet and it looks like a tumbleweed. [laughter] It doesn't go down like this. It's like, he taught him this, but he taught him that, and then he taught him this, but he taught him that. They were sharing knowledge and initiations and passing it on to each other. So don't be shy, it's your duty to pass it on. Study it until you know it well and then don't be shy to pass it on. You don't have to pass it on to 600 people. It can be two, three, one, it doesn't matter. How many people did Naropa pass on the Vajrayogini practice to? {kuche pamtingpa}, two. That's okay. [laughs] So don't think like that. Pass it on, all right?

I was granted this instruction by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin who came here... he became a Hlarampa Geshe in Sera Me in Tibet, became a monk at age 7 in 1928, lived a very pure monk's life. I've lived with him many years and have never seen him lead anything but a perfect monk's life. He's taught in the United States for over 25 years, never asked for a penny, I've never seen him ask anyone for anything, I mean, nothing. Totally free, taught us freely, went through all of the major subjects very patiently. Took him almost ten years to finish [blk: Liberation In The Palm Of Your Hand], took him almost ten years to finish Master Shantideva. He did it very patiently, consistently, didn't travel much, I mean, he dedicated his life to his students and gave almost every hour of his day to his students, so that's where this lineage comes from, okay. And a very skillful lama as far as what you need, has enough courage to be hard on his students when he has to. A lot of... I'm afraid to be hard on my students because I think they'll get mad and go away. He's very skillful, extremely skillful, a high tantric lama, graduated from Tantric College before Tibet was lost and became Assistant Director of the Tantric College, Gyume. A really fantastic lama, very good for me. So you're getting the pure lineage from that.

Then I'll do a short other prayer first, which is just auspicious. It's a praise of Lord Buddha and it's like a thank you for the Mahamudra teachings, the source of them, and then we'll do a little of the First Panchen Lama's root text. When I start the {lung}, which is after I finish with the bell stuff, then you have to really tune up your ears and try to concentrate on the words of the {lung}. Your only job is to listen well and to try not to think about getting home on time or anything like that. Imagine that you and I are alone, imagine that I'm holding this lineage, imagine that we're sitting quietly in a temple up in the Himalayas or whatever, and that you're receiving this transmission. Concentrate on it, okay?

Okay, first another prayer.

[Prayer]

[sound of many bells]

and here starts the {lung}...

{lung}

Congratulations. [laughs] Okay, we'll do a thank you mandala and a dedication. Dedicate the mandala to the long life of our lamas, okay? Especially Lama Zopa.

[Mandala]

[Dedication]

End
