



The Nine Yanas
by
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I will go through the nine yanas, the nine levels of Buddhism. I have to make it very clear at the beginning that when we say 'nine yanas' it sounds nice and neat, nine levels, but dharma as such cannot have any kind of limitations, ultimately, so you cannot say nine yanas, three yanas, twenty yanas, or fifty yanas. You cannot say that ultimately, but you can relatively. How did this happen? It is because Lord Buddha Shakyamuni after his enlightenment taught for about forty-five years, in a relative sense, in an ultimate sense he is teaching all the time. Even right now Buddha can manifest. Buddha is not limited to the physical body of Prince Siddhartha who born over 2500 years ago (we are about to celebrate the 2550th anniversary of his birth in 2006). Buddha lived 81 years, but his activity is not limited to that time. That was only one of Buddha Shakyamuni's countless nirmanakayas, which died in Kushinagar. His nirmanakaya and sambhogakaya are a manifestation of his dharmakaya, which is timeless and ever-present.

But what manifested during those forty-five years, and some of what was beyond those forty-five years through the sambhogakaya aspect of the Buddha, then all of that was put together and categorized by his disciples into nine levels. Buddha himself did not say "Today I am going to teach you the first level and tomorrow I'm going to teach you the second level etc." It was not like that. Buddha manifested dharma just like the sun manifests light. So the manifestation of Buddha's teaching, which was perceived by those who received it, all of that was put together and put into nine categories. Nine categories going upwards of course; the first category being the most basic, the second category more advanced and the ninth category being the highest and most advanced. That is how the nine yanas of Buddhism are.

Hinayana

The First Yana

The first of the nine categories is known as arhat—the teachings of the Theravada which can lead you to the realisation of nirvana (the realisation of arhathood). The view of this is that everything is like an illusion and everything is nothing except for two things: 1. the shortest moment, mind, and 2. the smallest object, an atom. These two things are reality, besides that everything is an illusion. The shortest moment cannot be held onto because it passes; it is like a lamp, you look at it and it looks the same but it is not the same. Every moment new light is coming and the old light is gone. It is not the same lamp. You can never look at the same lamp

or the same person, you can never look at anything as the same; even a picture you look at is not the same picture, it is a continuation, just like looking at a lamp or looking at a river. Also if you ask someone to sing a song again, the person cannot sing the song again. They can sing the song one more time but they cannot sing it again, it is impossible, you cannot go back to the past and sing the song again. This way then, on the first level of Buddhism, the basic view, these two things are ultimate, other than that everything is relative.

Then the practice is that one wishes to be free from suffering, which is caused by defilements such as attachment, anger, ignorance, jealousy, pride and stinginess. These are the six basic defilements and they cause us suffering because we become their slave. If you are the slave of anger, then you are suffering and others will suffer. If you are slave of greed and attachment, you are suffering and others will suffer. This way samsara is the house of suffering.

The practice here to be free from that suffering involves meditation, such as Vipashyana and Shamatha. Shamatha meditation is to calm down and Vipashyana is to be clear. Once you calm down, if you don't have the clarity then you just fall asleep. You don't want to fall into an ultimate sleep nor do you want to fall into a relative sleep. Therefore we have Shamatha and Vipashyana meditation as part of this particular practice. The result is the realisation of arhathood which has quite a few levels, roughly five levels of arhat, but I don't think it is necessary to go through the details. The first arhat is the lowest level of arhat and the fifth is the highest. Arhat means you are totally pure from all negativity, all defilements, you have totally purified all of your karma and reached a state of zero.

The Second Yana

The second yana is the pratyekabuddha, the self-Buddha. The difference between the view and philosophy of the arhat and pratyekabuddhayana is that instead of the two things being the ultimate (the shortest moment and smallest object), for the pratyekabuddha the smallest particle, the basis of all reality, is not ultimate truth, it is relative truth. But the shortest moment, the mind, the essence of the mind, is the ultimate truth. The shortest moment associates with the mind, and that is the ultimate truth, but the smallest object, the base of all reality, is relative truth.

The practice is similar to the arhat, such as the Four Noble Truths, Shamatha and Vipashyana etc, but the final realisation will happen in a place where there is no Buddha and no dharma. It will happen by itself. For example, a person who is ready to reach a pratyekabuddha realisation might be born in a place where there is no dharma but where they see some bones, and by seeing the bones they see impermanence. By seeing impermanence they see the worthlessness of everything that is done in samsara.

For example, where ever you go, on every mountain top there are ruins of castle of kings. Big kings or small kings, good kings or bad kings, it doesn't matter, they all had to have a castle to protect themselves. They had to build them on mountain tops so that their enemies

had the hardest time to get them, so all the mountain tops of the world are littered with the ruins of castles once lived in by kings.

Also the borders of the world are all relative, they are all a joke actually, because if you think about it ten million years ago, then where was Tibet and China? They did not exist. They were at the bottom of the sea. Where was India? It was actually right next to Africa. Also North and South-America, they were right next to Europe. Everything was all one big lump. It took millions of years to separate each from one another and then slowly form. I think luckily the Indian island somehow managed to hit the Mongolian Plate and develop into where I come from. The interesting thing is that on top of the Tibetan Plate, if you break a big piece of stone, inside you see fish because it used to be at the bottom of the sea. So the big deal about all these countries in the world fighting with each other and everybody on each other's throat is just nonsense. But of course, we cannot dismiss it because it is there. By knowing it is nonsense we have to be nonsense. I think we will do much better having some wisdom in our nonsense. I think all over the world humanity needs lots of wisdom.

Anyway, that is how the pratyekabuddha will find the dharma by himself and attain the final realisation by himself. But to reach to that level will have a lineage of a kind. But that stage, the final stage, he does by himself. That is what we call pratyekabuddha, *rang sangye*: *rang* means self and *sangye* means Buddha.

Mahayana

The Third Yana

The third aspect is the bodhisattvayana, *jangchup sempai thekpa* in Tibetan. Actually these are the basis of Vajrayana. Many teachers and scholars like to say two yanas, Hinayana and Mahayana. Then they like to divide the Mahayana into two, Sutrayana and Tantrayana. But I personally find it a little bit superficial because there is no such thing as Sutrayana, because Vinaya, Abhidharma and Sutra are three things, tripitaka. Vinaya and Abhidharma are not Sutra, Sutra is Sutra. Also some of the Sutras are Theravada Sutras and some of the Abhidharma is Mahayana but Vinaya is almost purely Theravada. This way it's maybe politically correct but not exactly 100% correct from my point of you. When I teach dharma I try to teach it as openly as possible, but sometimes some people get offended because they don't like you to say things clearly. Some people like things wrapped up—even if they are hit with a stone they like to be hit with the stone inside cotton wool so that it looks like a ping pong ball. But when it hits you it is very hard and you end up going to hospital because it was not a ping pong ball, it was a lead ball put inside a ping pong ball. Anyway, I don't know how to do that so I say things directly. But I really think the nine yanas are a very clear and honest way so that people will not be misled.

Now in the bodhisattvayana the basic thing is to take the bodhisattva vow, which has two stages: the bodhisattva aspiration vow and the bodhisattva vow in action. In the action vow

you have many more bodhisattva precepts to keep and the practice is the six paramitas. The progressive practice of the bodhisattva is actually through five paths. Through the five levels of the path you reach ten levels of realisation: a first level bodhisattva, second level bodhisattva etc. The tenth level bodhisattva is the highest of the bodhisattva levels.

The definition of the realisation of bodhisattva levels is very simple. For example, an arhat is perfect but perfect in the context of the shortest moment and smallest object. Within the spheres of physical reality of one kind there is nothing higher than arhat that you can reach. Reaching arhat realisation is the highest which a human being of planet Earth can reach, the highest physical and mental realisation. An arhat is perfect as one, but limited because it is perfect only as one. A first level bodhisattva is perfect one hundred times. A first level bodhisattva is free of both of the external smallest atom and internal shortest moment; they are relative truth to a bodhisattva. A bodhisattva realisation does not have that limitation. But a first level bodhisattva has limitations compared to a second level bodhisattva. A first level bodhisattva can manifest in one hundred places at the same time, perfectly, at all times. An arhat can manifest in one place perfectly at all times. A second level bodhisattva can manifest in ten thousand places perfectly at all times. A third level bodhisattva can manifest in one million places perfectly at all times. A fourth level bodhisattva can manifest in one hundred million places perfectly at all times. This way each level of a bodhisattva is one hundredfold more perfect, which means less limitation.

This is through the practice of the five paths. The first path is The Path of Accumulation, because you have to have conditions; you have to accumulate conditions. Without conditions you can never get things right. You can have the best seed, but if there is no sun, no water, and no earth then nothing will happen; you cannot grow anything out of that best seed. Conditions for any kind of development and maturity are necessary. For that the accumulation of merit is extremely necessary. It's very interesting because for many people merit is something that is difficult to understand. For many teachers it is not easy to talk about merit, because when you talk about merit teachers are afraid that other people think they are asking for money! Another thing about merit is somehow the dualistic concepts of people are complexes, like some short people have Napoleon complex, others have inferiority or superiority complexes. Worldly people have these complexes: they want the best thing but they don't want the best thing for the best thing. For example, the reactions that many people have towards a very nice temple and a gilded Buddha. I can see right through them, because the first thing that comes to their mind is, "Why waste gold on Buddha? Why not use that to feed the poor?" This comes to their mind very quickly. Then I ask them, "Okay, but why do you wear gold? Why don't you feed the poor with it?" When people see sacred things being offered the best they don't feel comfortable. But when they acquire the best things for themselves they are very happy. That is what I call a complex. I don't know what kind of complex it is, maybe you can find a new term for it. It is not a Napoleon complex or inferiority or superiority complex but it is some kind of complex. I have one word for it but it doesn't really describe it: U.F.E. unidentifiable flying ego. A UFO is an unidentified flying object, here

you have 'e' instead of 'o'. It is ego but it cannot be identified and it is flying very clearly.

Merit is extremely important. For example, if you go to a temple then what do you do? You take a small clay pot with a few drops of oil in it and a little bit of string on it (a butterlamp) and you light it and take it to the altar. Then you bow and ask for all kinds of things, just for that! It is like going to a big shop, collecting ten different items each costing 500 euros and just give them 5 cents and asking for all of that. It is like that, in a way. If you want limitless freedom and liberation then your dedication has to be limitless. If your dedication is limited but what you want is limitless then it is never going to work. Another way of doing this is to give up everything. That's what Milarepa did. Milarepa didn't go and build solid gold statues or monasteries which have thousands of monks or write tripitakas in solid gold. He gave up everything and went to a cave and meditated there. That is the other way of doing it. Anyway, you have to let go of your attachment and you have to let go of your attachment to the dearest thing, which is your own life.

Before Milarepa went to the cave he said, "If I come down from this cave without realisation then may all the protectors and gods of the mountain punish and destroy me." He said that and he meant it. How did he succeed? When he was in one cave and people found out and started to bring offerings to him and all of that then he ran away and found another cave. There are six main caves and many other little caves of Milarepa because in some places he managed to hide for a long time but in other places people found him very quickly. One of the people who found him was his own sister, other were hunters out hunting. Things like that, and that is why Milarepa had to go from one place to another until he attained enlightenment, because he had taken that vow. So as soon as people came and were about to worship him he was gone. This way the accumulation of merit in many ways is extremely important and without merit the meritorial things will not happen. The cause and condition for meritorial things to happen is merit. It is not that some old guy is sitting up in the sky somewhere and entering into a log book what kind of donations you have made to him or his colleagues. It is not like that, it is what develops in you by letting go and by dedicating and sacrificing, that is merit.

Actually, as far as sacrificing is concerned I have to be very careful as it can be misunderstood very easily. For example, in Tibet, more than 1500 years ago, there were animal and human sacrifices, but I am not talking about that kind of sacrifice. I am talking about, for example, here in cities like Delhi so many people sacrifice their time to do social work. They don't ask for money, they sacrifice their time, like social work. Also people here in this centre work and don't charge, they make the time out of their regular day to day time. All of that is sacrifice and is the accumulation of merit.

The first path is described as the path of the accumulation of merit but at the same time the accumulation of merit is also purification, because the more positive ness you accumulate that much negative ness you purify. The more goodness you accumulate that much badness you purify. It happens naturally. It is like two sides of a coin, it happens by itself. But in the practice there is accumulation oriented practice and purification oriented practice. For

example, being generous is an accumulation oriented practice and going for pilgrimage, taking hardships etc, are purification aspects of practice. In Tibet, in the past, you would find very few real beggars, but you would find lots of beggars at holy places. Why? It was not because they had nothing, but because when going for pilgrimage, they could be sons or daughters of a rich family but they would not take anything except the bare minimum. A bowl to eat food from, some cooking utensils to boil water or make tea, and they carried their clothes. Also good shoes are very important. That's all they would have and they would go begging. The pilgrims always begged, which is also a chance for the locals to accumulate merit. For the pilgrims it is purification because they don't have anything and they live on what people give them. Most of the beggars in Tibet in the olden days were not actual beggars but pilgrims. Of course there were real beggars but not that many because everybody had land. Tibet is a huge area, 2.5 million square kilometres of land with only 4 or 5 million people living there, so they didn't need to beg, they could raise their own things, there was plenty. But the accumulation of merit is a very important part of the practice, as is purification. So that is the first path.

The second path is known as the path of implementation, or path of application. Once you purify and develop merit then you are implementing your merit and pureness. Instead of keeping on accumulating merit for the sake of accumulating it and keeping on purifying for the sake of purification, whatever merit that you are able to achieve and whatever pureness that you have been able to develop, you implement it and use it for realisation. That is the second path.

The third path is known as the path of seeing, because you implement your merit and wisdom and then you are able to see and realise the primordial wisdom which is within you. It's very much a Vajrayana thing but also in Mahayana the Buddha nature is a very important factor. When you say "May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings to attain Buddhahood," you have to believe in Buddha nature, otherwise how can you make somebody into something that he or she is not. Also how can you make yourself into something which you yourself are not? So, you are Buddha in essence. You have primordial wisdom as your essence. Therefore, on that ground, on that basis you are saying, "May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings to attain Buddhahood." That is the path of seeing, and in this, you see and you realise that essence. The end of the path of seeing is the first level bodhisattva realisation: when that takes place it is the end of the path of seeing.

Next is path of meditation, which means the continuation from the first bodhisattva level to the last stages of the bodhisattva levels.

Finally the fifth path is no more practice, no more meditation, or no more learning. That is final. Why do we meditate? It is not to become a meditation champion. Why do we accumulate merit? It is not to become the king of the Universe. Why do we purify ourselves? It is not to become transparent. We meditate, accumulate our merit and purify our negative deeds so that no more meditation is necessary, there is no more merit to accumulate and there is no more negativity to purify. When we reach the highest level of a bodhisattva, then there is no more meditation, no more practice, no more development is necessary. That is the final stage of the

third yana, the Mahayana or the bodhisattvayana.

Vajrayana

Now the Theravada and Mahayana aspects are complete and we go into the Vajrayana. There are four major levels of tantra, some scholars like to call them four classes of tantra, but it is levels, not classes. A class means that you can be in one class without being in another class, but these are levels which you reach gradually from the first tantra to the second, third and fourth. They are different levels of tantra: kriyatantra, upatantra, yogatantra and anuttarayogatantra. Anuttarayogatantra has three further levels: mahatantra, anutantra and atitantra. That makes six levels of tantra.

The first three yantras are arhatiyana, pratyekabuddhayana and bodhisattvayana, then kriya, upa and yoga, and maha, anu and ati, which makes nine levels. When we look at Tibetan Buddhism, this way of saying the nine yantras is mostly used by the Nyingma lineage. I'm a Kagyupa but Nyingmapas will explain it this way. It doesn't mean it's the Nyingmas' way but it is very common in the Nyingmapas' way of describing all the yantras. Others will describe it more like there are two, Hinayana and Mahayana, with Mahayana having two, Sutranyana and Tantranyana. Others will say there are Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana, and Vajrayana has four which are kriya, upa, yoga and anuttarayoga. So putting them into nine stages is done more in the Nyingmapa texts. I have the lineage of this because of one very important text, a Nyingmapa text, written by Ngari Pandita, Pema Wangi Gyalpo known as *Domsum namnqe* (a detailed teaching about Vinaya).

In this text it is taught this way and I made a booklet, a long time ago when I was 22 years old, so I made these notes based on that.

Now the three tantras kriya, upa and yoga are described in Tibetan as *chi kathub rig ched gi thekpa*. *She* means external. *Kathub* means working hard, hardship, effort, not easy. *Rig* means seeing, knowing, understanding, realising. *ched* means doing. *gi* is grammar, meaning 'of'. The easiest way to describe *thekpa* is yana, like Mahayana. What this means is that through outer hardship, effort and practice one recognises, realises and sees the inner realisation.

The Fourth Yana

It's very difficult to define the kriya, upa and yoga tantras precisely, but in a simple generalized manner it is quite easy to describe the differences between these tantras when compared to each other. For example kriya, the view or the philosophy of kriya tantra is: the mind is ultimately free of any kind of dualistic limitation or dualistic reality. It is described as being free of four extremes: it is there, it is not there, it is both there and not there and it is neither there nor not there. It is free of those extremes, which is the kriyatantra's view about

the mind and about everything else. This will be pretty much the view of all the tantras, but kriya being the first it is described very clearly.

Then the activity, action or behaviour of a kriya practitioner is very pure and clean. For example, they clean themselves and always keep everything clean. They are very much into pureness, by the definition of cleanliness. Also they are vegetarians, so will not eat meat, eggs or garlic.

There are two aspects of meditation, two different kinds of kriya meditation. The first one is like the first step of the kriya; you never visualise yourself as a deity, you always appear here as yourself with the deity worshipped up there. You never become the deity. The first step of kriya is like that. At the second step you have some kind of manifestation of yourself into the deity, but it is with six particular definitions: emptiness, syllable, sound, image, mudra and symbols. Through these six ways you transform yourself into a deity. There are these differences between these two steps in the kriyatantra itself. Kriyatantra has many tantras within and each tantra has its own mandala, deity, and ritual etc.

So that is the philosophy, the action (behaviour) and meditation of kriyatantra.

Then the result, the final fruition of kriyatantra is known as 'vajra-bhumi, three families': the body, speech and mind (body-vajra, speech-lotus, mind-jewel. Vajra, padma, and ratna, three families). The realisation is the three kayas based on that, and the manifestation is the five wisdoms. The five defilements transform and manifests as the five wisdoms.

The fruition of the kriya, upa and yoga tantras are pretty much same, but the magnitude of the realisation, the comprehensiveness of it varies because the kriyatantra must be completed in order to reach to upa tantra and upa must be completed in order to reach yoga tantra. Then yoga tantra must be completed in order to reach to the anuttarayogatantra.

Most of the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana abhishekas and practices are anuttarayogatantra. Therefore, somehow, all of those things will happen if you are practicing anuttarayogatantra. For example, if you are looking at the moon, you will see it according to the binoculars that you have. So if your binoculars are very good and you have a whole planetarium at your disposal then you will see everything that happens on the moon. But if you are practising anuttarayogatantra and your capacity is kriyatantra, then you are practising anuttarayogatantra at the kriyatantra level. This will happen, naturally. There is not so much of the stage by stage practices, "Now you are a beginner, therefore I will teach you kriyatantra. Then when you have done kriyatantra for five years you can do yogatantra." We don't have that, most of the time.

So this is about kriyatantra, the first of the six levels of the tantra.

The Fifth Yana

The view of upatantra is: ultimately all dharmas are clear light and emptiness. So all dharmas do not have any relative shortcomings, ultimately, but relatively all the things that are here, within us and around us, are part of the mandala. This mandala is described as the vajra space

mandala, the space of the vajra mandala. That means ultimately everything is perfect, but also relatively everything is perfect; everything is a manifestation of that perfect ultimate. This is the view of this particular tantra.

Then the behaviour, cleanliness and being vegetarian etc., are still considered but not too seriously. Upatantra is still particular about the food that you eat and the clothes that you wear and things like that, some dualistic distinctions about what are the right and wrong things to eat etc., are still made, there is still that dualism.

When it comes to the practice then there are two levels to it. The first one is known as *tсенчey* and the second one is known as *tсенmed*, we say *tсенчey kyi naljor* (tsenchey yoga) and *tсенmed kyi naljor* (tsenmed yoga).

An example of *tсенчey* is that the visualisation now also involves self visualisation as a deity, the self and front visualisations are much more like on an equal level. So there are two things: your self visualisation as a deity and your visualisation of the deity in front of you. They are two things but similar things, like a brother or sister.

The second aspect is involved with three principles, *jukpa*, *neypa* and *dangwa*. *jukpa* means entering, *neypa* means remaining and *dangwa* means awakening.

Here, the first principle (*jukpa*) is involved with the samsaric or external reality, knowing that it has never been there: so something that appears here right now has never been here ultimately. With this you will not have the grasping and attachment as such. With that view you enter.

Neypa is: once you enter into that state through meditation, through practice, then you remain in that calm-abiding, harmonious non-dualistic state.

There is also a sense of compassion involved here, because when you are remaining in this state and you see other beings that are not in that state then what you manifest from within is compassion towards them. For example, you see other beings who are nasty to each other, nasty to you, or attached to each other, jealous of each other or to you, all of these defilements you see in them, then by knowing that ultimately that is not there, and by yourself being able to be in that state, then what manifests from you as the reaction towards that observation is compassion. That is *dangwa*. *dangwa* by definition is awakening. When you are able to see other beings not able to remain in *jukpa* and *neypa*, then what you manifest is compassion, that is *dangwa*.

These three principles are very important principles of upatantra. *jukpa*, *neypa* and *dangwa* are also known as the ultimate bodhichitta. So that is the practice.

Then the fruition: you reach the realisation but it is more involved with the karma and ratna families of the Buddha families. The first one (kriyatantra) had the three families, but here (in the upatantra) the vajra-bhumi realisation is attained more in the direction of the ratna and karma families. Another way of describing upatantra is that the view is very much like yogatantra but the behaviour is very much like kriyatantra. Sometimes this is known as the tantra of both (kriya and yoga together).

The Sixth Yana

The third tantra and sixth of the nine yogas is yogatantra. The view is same as the upatantra, but external activity such as being vegetarian, washing all the time and all these kinds of things [are not taken too seriously]. For example, in kriyatantra even before saying your prayers you have to wash your mouth, feet and hands. We call it five things to clean: two feet, two hands and the mouth. You have to wash all the time, whenever you pray and do rituals. Also you are totally vegetarian. Here, these things are observed as a condition, but not more than a condition. They are important but not that important, one does not take these things too seriously. For example, if you are going to perform a puja tomorrow you might not eat meat today. Kriya practitioners will be vegetarians whether they are doing a ritual or not. Yogatantra practitioners might become vegetarians before doing the puja, and during the puja of course, but after the puja is completed then they might not observe the same thing. So this sort of thing is not that important here.

The most important thing in the behaviour or the action of a yogatantra practitioner is to always try and remain with the pride of the deity. Whatever you are doing, you try to maintain the presence of the deity, for whichever practice that you are practising. So you try to maintain that in your regular activities. That is an important awareness that defines yogatantra practice.

When it comes to the meditation then there are the similar two stages to upatantra. The first one is also called *tšenchey kyi naljor* and the second one also *tšenmed kyi naljor*, the same names but the definitions are slightly different. In yogatantra *tšenchey* means the foundation, the seed, the speech, the mind, the entire physical manifestation. We call it *ngönpar janchupa nga*, five bodhi. When you are visualising the deities these five bodhis are a step by step process, it is built up from the first to the second etc. Then another very important part of this is that after the visualisation there is an abhisheka (empowerment). There is also a consecration and an offering. These things are known as four *chomtrul*. It is difficult to translate but it might be 'four miracles' or 'four transformations', 'four miraculous transformations'. That is, the meditation, the empowerment, the consecration and the offering. These four are described as four *chomtrul*. That is how you visualise the deity and practise the deity of that particular tantra. That is the *tšenchey*.

Then the *cheme kyi naljor*, *cheme yoga*, for this is, ultimately, the ultimate essence, its blessing manifests as it is. Therefore, what you see around you, within you and what you are, are actually not separate things. The yogi of this practice will be remaining in this state, and therefore in a superficial, easy naïve sort of way we can say 'heaven on earth', but it is like, 'this is the Pure Land' and 'I am the Buddha'. That is part of the practice of the yogatantra. Then of course the three kayas and five wisdoms are the ultimate fruition of this practice. So that is kriya, upa, and yoga.

The Seventh Yana

Now the anuttarayoga is in three parts: maha, anu, and ati. First is the mahatantra, which is also described as father tantra, *fa gyud*. There are three aspects: father tantra, mother tantra and the tantra of non-duality. The view or philosophy behind the mahatantra is: ultimately all phenomena are inseparable from the ultimate essence of the mind, so it is the great dharmakaya. So ultimately everything is the great dharmakaya but relatively all of the thoughts and their karmic manifestations, everything manifests as unseparable manifestations of the primordial wisdom and the kayas. So primordial wisdom and the kayas, the unseparability of primordial wisdom and the kayas, that is how everything manifests relatively. That is the view of the mahatantra (father tantra).

The activities or behaviours of these practitioners, the yogis, is that there is no attachment and no clinging to anything in samsara, whether it is clean or dirty, vegetarian or non-vegetarian, positive or negative, there is no clinging, and no importance and no attachment. There are no differences between any of those things, everything is the manifestation of the dharmakaya, therefore there is nothing that you should hide away and there is nothing that you should exhibit, it is all equal. That is the activity and behaviour, the conduct of the mahatantra practitioner.

The meditation is—each one of these tantras has so many insights, but then we have maha-mahatantra, maha-anutantra, maha-atitantra. So maha has three aspects of maha itself. It is father-father tantra, father-mother tantra and father-union tantra. This way, the first one, an example of father-father tantra is Guyhasamaja. I will not go to all of these but just give you an example with Guyhasamaja, which is a father-father tantra. In this method is the visualisation, the creation stage and the completion stage is the end of the creation stage. During the creation stage you develop everything and then when everything is completed, that is the completion stage. This is the main aspect of visualisation practice.

Then one very important element added to that is breathing practice. Breathing is the very important connection between the illusion, which is form, feeling, touch, all of this outside reality and the physical body and all the elements, all of these skandhas. This outside and inside, the five senses and the five sense objects, all of these connections are because of the subtleness of the wind. Emotions generate wind, and therefore the mind, which does not have any kind of physical reality involved, is involved with the physical reality, the five skandhas. As the result of that, right now we are here. Each one of us has a physical manifestation in which our mind is hosted, saying it nicely of course. If I say it in an ironical manner, a cynical manner, then trapped, it is imprisoned. This has happened because of the wind, the air, the energy, which is developed by emotions.

For example, one of the things that determine whether our physical body manifests as male or female is; if there is too much attachment from the feminine side to the masculine

side then we will end up being born as male, and if there is too much attachment from the masculine side to the feminine side then we will be born as female. These things happen because of the power of karma, and this is how this particular energy or wind, which is a very important factor, [functions.] Therefore, breathing practice is very important in the tantric practice of nadis and bindus and kundalini yoga. Those are the practices according to the father tantra of the father tantra, such as Guyhasamaja. I will not go into the other two aspects (father-mother and father-union).

Now the true fruition of the father tantra, whether it is father-father, father-mother, or father-union, the essence of this tantra is, the close cause, the three, is achieved through the close cause three. The close cause means: your body is nirmanakaya, your expression and your energy is sambhogakaya and your mind is dharmakaya. That is the closest thing with us right now. So the close cause is that. Even if you are an ignorant person or a very enlightened person, it really doesn't matter as far as that close cause is concerned. The close cause is same: this body is the nirmanakaya close cause; all the expression, energy and speech is sambhogakaya, and the essence of the mind is dharmakaya. That is close cause, *nye dju* in Tibetan. *Nye* means close, not far away, and *dju* means cause. Because of the close cause then five kayas are spontaneously achieved. That means it is a very high and very profound state of realisation which is required in order to achieve the final fruition of the father tantra. Of course we are talking about the father tantra as a practitioner who reached the father tantra state of realisation already.

The Eighth Yana

Now the second one, the mother tantra, the view of the mother tantra is more towards emptiness and space. There are three kind of mandalas perceived in the views and the philosophies of the mother tantra, we call it the three mandala principle of the mother tantra. The first one is Kuntuzangmo (Samantabhadri). The space of Samantabhadri is known as primordial mandala. That is one view or principle of the mother tantra.

The second aspect of the mandala is known as the mandala which is spontaneously born. That is wisdom Samantabhadra, spontaneously born mandala. That is not the emptiness aspect but the joyful aspect. Emptiness is the container, the harmonious calm-abiding joyful state, clarity, is what is contained in the space. So that is Samantabhadra, the spontaneously born mandala, the second aspect.

The third aspect is known as the root bodhichitta mandala, *tsawa jangchupsem kyilkhor*. *Tsawa* means root, *jangchupsem* means bodhichitta, and *kyilkhor* is mandala. That is, space, Samantabhadri, and joy, Samantabhadra, the union of these two mandalas is the son or the daughter or the offspring, which is the root bodhisattva mandala.

These three mandalas are the basic philosophy and principle of the mother tantra, *ma gyu*. As a yogi of the mother tantra then these three mandalas are applied to everything: a yogi will see everything in these three mandalas. That is the view and philosophy of a mother tantra

practitioner yogi.

Now the practice, there are two aspects: *drolam* (liberation path) and *tharlam* (method path). For *drolam* there are quite a few definitions in it, which have very slight different emphasis, but to make it simple, primordial wisdom which is not contaminated by dualistic thought, following and observing that, then visualisation and recitation and mantra, as a condition for the actual deity, which represents the sambhogakaya of the Buddha, to emerge, like a fish emerges from the murky water: when a fish gets closer to the surface you can see the fish but when it goes deeper into the water you don't see it. So like this, the visualisation arises out of the particular circumstances, such as visualisation, mantra and the recitation.

Based on this view, the three mandalas, then these things, such as visualisation, recitation and mantra, are just an aid to it so that the inherent primordial Buddha within manifests, like the fish manifests out of the water when it comes to the surface. This is not only applied to the mind but also to external reality. We call it *nötjy lhaie kyilkhor*, which means: the outer container, the universe, the inner contained, sentient beings, all are the mandala of the god. God by definition here does not mean god of the six realms, but god referred to as the deity, the Buddha, the sambhogakaya, the nirmanakaya. This time it is actually the nirmanakaya. That is *drolam*, the liberation aspect.

Then *thablam*, the method aspect. Sometimes curious scholars make a very simple conclusion about this, but this is not a simple thing. It is a very sacred and profound thing, and also an almost impossible thing to get right for any dualistically minded person like us. Even for someone with just a little bit of attachment, jealousy, ignorance, and grasping, to get it right would be almost impossible. So we have to truly reach to that level, the mother tantra level, in order to implement *thablam*.

According to the various texts there are five or seven chakras from the crown to the secret place. Some tantras have five and some seven, according to the particular manifestation of the deity. In order to practise this appropriately the primordial wisdom is realised through the primordial harmony. The primordial harmony is realised through primordial joy. Primordial joy is realised through primordial union. So that is a very high tantric practise. That is known as the mother tantras' *thablam*, the method realisation.

If it is five chakras then four of them are known as the above chakras and one is known as the below chakra. If it is seven chakras then six chakras are known as above chakras and the seventh chakra is known as the lower or below chakra. The practice of this is so profound so that the paths of accumulation, application, seeing, meditation and no-meditation, will all be achieved through the practice of the five chakra liberation. But of course a person who can ride a garuda and fly around the solar system has to be someone who doesn't need oxygen! So if you need oxygen forget about riding a garuda and going around the solar system. You better buy some plane tickets and go around the earth in a well regulated cabin! All this I am teaching just for the sake knowledge, you can't really do much about it right now. At least I can't.

Then the result, the final fruition of this is realising the four kayas: dharmakaya,

sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya and svabhavikakaya, which is the unity of the three kayas.

The Ninth Yana

Now the last of the nine yantras is atiyoga. In this the view is: everything has always been perfect, from heaven to hell everything is perfect all the time. That is the highest view, but the highest view is reserved for the highest evolved beings. You can only listen to it and I can only talk about it. For example, for me, if I take food which is cooked before yesterday and not kept in a fridge I might end up in hospital. There is a very big difference between something that is fresh today or cooked two days ago and not kept in a fridge. So as long as things are like that, then everything is not a manifestation of the dharmakaya. I cannot see things way. So the atiyoga view is something that I can hold as an aspiration and as a principal, but I cannot act upon it. I have to act otherwise.

Now the action or the activity of the atiyoga practitioner is: There is nothing that you can say, "This is wrong thing to do" and there is nothing that you can say, "This is right thing to do." It is like a true sadhu. If you meet a true sadhu, a true yogi like Tilopa or Naropa, then there is no thing that is different from another. I will give you an example. Drilpupa was one of the eighty-four mahasiddhas in India and was a monk in a very strict monastery. But he had a consort, a son, a daughter and he drank wine like tea. That was all against the monastery rules, so when the monastery found this out the discipline master came and told him to get out. He said, "You are not fit to be a monk here because you are doing all the things that a monk is not supposed to do, so get out." Drilpupa said "Okay," then embraced his consort, turned his son into a vajra, his daughter into a bell, kicked his wine bottle and rose into the sky. He was bigger than the whole monastery and sitting in the sky while the whole monastery, including the discipline master, were flooded from the one bottle of wine. They were all screaming, "We are very sorry, help us!" Then Drilpupa, with his consort, his son as the vajra and daughter as the bell, sang a song from the sky saying that if you guys are equal to me, come up here! This kind of action is only relevant for people like him. If you kick your bottle of wine it will only damage your carpet. And if you have a son and a daughter I don't think you can turn them into a vajra and bell, you have to send them to boarding school. Also if your discipline master kicks you out of the monastery you have to go through the door, and walking in disgrace, you cannot rise into the sky and sing a song from up there. I'm not talking about you only. I'm also talking about me. That way we better behave ourselves according to the rules. But for an atiyoga practitioner there is no difference between this is right and this is wrong. When you reach to that state everything is part of the dharmakaya.

The meditation of atiyoga practice is: everything is always the embodiment of the deity. There are four aspects of manifestation within the practitioner that are always perfect: everything is always perfect; everything is always the manifestation of ultimate truth; everything is always completely accomplished, and; everything is beyond any dualistic comparison, there is nothing comparable out of all the examples, out of all the equals there is

nothing equal to it. These four things are known as *nangwa shi*. There are many others but this somehow covers it.

Then the fruition is spontaneously arising realisation, Ati-Buddha, Kuntuzangpo (Samantabhadra). You reach to the level of Samantabhadra, and the final ultimate non-dualistic confidence of all, and final liberation of nirvana itself. It is not even nirvana, it is free from nirvana itself. That is the final fruition of atiyoga.

This way you can see quite clearly that kriya, upa, yoga, maha, anu, ati are all step by step processes and development. But many of the Tibetan Vajrayana practices are mothertantras or atitantras. There are of course also kriyatantras, and tantric practice of kriya tantra where you are not allowed to eat meat and you have to be vegetarian. So there are those, but most of them are anuttarayogatantras, and within anuttarayogatantras there are mothertantras and atiyogatantras. At the same time, as a practitioner practises then it goes according to his or her level. You do not automatically reach the realisation of atiyogatantra by practising atiyogatantra right away. Atiyoga practice you do; but as a result then you reach the kriyayoga realisation. Then slowly it reaches to the upa, then yoga, maha, anu and ati, gradually. If you are doing a retreat in a very serious manner then it will be faster. If you are doing it in a mundane kind of worldly life, then it will be a little bit like your job for three hours and then having Kentucky Fried Chicken, pizza and hamburgers for one week, then again doing your job for three hours. So like that, it will be little bit better, a little bit worse, a little bit better, a little bit worse.

I think this much is enough as far as the nine yantras are concerned and I can take a couple of questions.

Questions

Question: What does it mean to reach the realisation of a Buddha family?

Rinpoche: Actually each one of the kriya, upa and yogatantras are focused on a particular Buddha family. Each one of the Buddha families is associated with each one of the colours, defilements, and five directions (east, west, south, north and central). The five defilements are ignorance, attachment, anger, jealousy and pride. The transformation of those defilements are the five wisdoms; so they are associated with each other. This way kriya practice for example is for those who have lots of desire, like us, and when anger and all the defilements are very strong. In order to overcome all of those defilements we have to do everything to minimize them. In order not to kill we don't eat meat. Everything we keep clean because we don't want to make our offerings dirty with our dirty hands, so we wash our hands. Also we will not breathe over our altar, so we cover our mouth. So we are extremely careful with all these things that make bad karma and that support the defilements. That way, the particular Buddha family of the basic defilements, as the result of the practice you attain the realisation of that: you attain the realisation of what that Buddha represents. That particular wisdom is developed

and that particular defilement is abolished and purified. For all the details you really have to go into the kriyatantra, yogatantra and upatantra texts, which is like going into the Amazon forest and identifying each one of the trees and species there. It is an enormous job.

Question: When we receive the anuttarayogatantra initiation tomorrow, how should we take it?

Rinpoche: You take it as a blessing, because it's a public blessing. Full abhishekas are only given by gurus to disciples; one guru to one disciple most of the time. Also not in one day. The first part is given and then practiced, then the second part of the abhisheka is given and practised. Each abhisheka has four stages so it might take ten or twenty years to complete one abhisheka. Tomorrow all of that will be given in two hours to 20000 people. So it is for blessing.

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