



## The Buddha Nature in the Context of the Four Noble Truths

by

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Translated from Tibetan by Ken McLeod

I would like to express my appreciation to everyone for coming here this evening and to wish all of you who have come to this discussion of the Buddha's teachings, the *Buddhadharma*, my very best. Before I begin, though, I wish to remind you to arouse the pure attitude while receiving the instructions. We do not only receive the teachings to understand Buddhism for personal well-being but to be able to help a limitless number of *sentient beings* by integrating the dharma<sup>1</sup> in our lives. The altruistic motivation is the wish to receive the teachings in order to truly help others.

There are many different religions in the world. Despite this variety, we see that all religions share a common goal in that they strive to be of benefit to living beings. This is the one feature all religions have in common. When we look at the various traditions and see the way they seek to help others, we find there is quite a variety of approaches. There is a considerable difference among religious traditions in the methods of practice to bring into experience what is the heart of each. While it is reasonable to say that the aim of all religions is concerned with reality, with the way things ultimately are, it is conclusive that this isn't something that varies or changes. The way reality is described and presented is what varies a great deal from one tradition to another. Very briefly, the heart of the matter is that every religious tradition, and a follower's practice of any particular religion, is really directed towards helping others.

The question may arise at this point: How does help come about? How is someone helped through religious practice?

If we look at the way we ordinarily function, we see that all of us are basically very similar in that we all want to be happy. We seek to experience joy in our lives and to avoid suffering; we aspire to find some freedom from suffering and pain. As a result, all of us spend a great deal of energy and effort in trying to establish a level of material happiness and comfort. This is everybody's major project. Some people are successful at that and others aren't. Whether one is successful or not, final analysis shows this is but a limited form of happiness. When we consider how we might be completely at peace and happy with ourselves, we understand it is

very difficult for happiness to come from reliance on the way we live or from what we have, and so forth. In the end, we find that however successful we might have been, there isn't any real sort of satisfaction or contentment within.

Then we come to see that there is an internal situation – let's say within our hearts, within our minds – in which we have been struggling to bring happiness to ourselves internally by relying on external sources. In the end, we come to realize this is a futile endeavor. The questions then arise: Where do we find internal happiness? What is the way we come to lasting satisfaction?

When we ask this, we actually begin to seek a religious or spiritual answer. Let's take a person as an example. This person could be any of us who achieves success in the world, who has a home, food, clothes, and income, everything that makes up life. Generally, we think such a person should be happy. Certainly, they will usually be physically comfortable. But we can often observe that with a considerable amount of physical comfort and ease in their lives, their minds or hearts may not be at peace and may not be very happy. They are still subject to anxiety, worry, fear, various *disturbing emotions*, and so forth. On the other hand, some people who don't have a house, don't have much food, and hardly have anything to wear are actually very content. In India there are many people who literally live on the streets and yet some of them are actually very happy people. Whenever you see them, they are laughing and enjoying life. From this we can observe that there is a significant difference between being at peace within oneself, being happy inwardly, in one's heart, and simply being physically comfortable or having everything nice.

The way we come to discover or uncover happiness within ourselves, to find unmistakable peace, is through the teachings of Buddhism. At least I am going to talk about the teachings of Buddhism, although I am sure this is the concern of any spiritual tradition.

In Buddhism, we have a very large collection of teachings. We talk about *84,000 different teachings of the dharma*,<sup>ii</sup> "the teachings of Buddha." This vast number of teachings is described as being necessary in order to deal with the tremendous range of personalities, characteristics, aptitudes, and temperaments we find among people and different beings. But the point of these teachings is to subdue disturbances within us, what we call "disturbing emotions,"<sup>iii</sup> so that at the heart of the matter we come to find peace within ourselves through subduing emotional disturbances. The key point here is what we might describe as taming or disciplining the mind, or our heart.<sup>iv</sup>

One of the great teachers in the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism is Milarepa,<sup>v</sup> who sang in one of his songs: "Oh, I don't know spiritual discipline. The main point is to tame the mind." He is talking about a body of teachings known as "moral discipline" or the *Vinaya* in Sanskrit, one of

the three sections of teachings in Buddhism. There are also the instructions on discourses and the analysis of existence, known as the *Abhidharma*. So, we have the *Vinaya*, the *Sutra*, and the *Abhidharma* – discipline, discourses, and analysis.<sup>vi</sup>

The instructions on moral discipline or ethics consist of a detailed enumeration of the various ordinations in Buddhism and the code of ethics associated with each. For instance, there is full ordination as a monk or nun and lay ordination. Many people simply regard this as the Buddhist tradition and think it is some kind of custom. They don't really appreciate the point of this particular code of ethics, and the point is actually very simple. By observing such a code of ethics and the very detailed principles of behavior, we come to train our own mind and heart. It is our mind or our heart that determines our actions in every given situation. Body and speech are simply servants of the mind, the mind being like a king. Whatever comes up in the mind is translated into the body and speech – they just follow the direction.

And yet, our mind has very little control. It is virtually fully subject to other influences. It is very difficult for most of us to have any kind of focused attention, presence, or mindfulness. In this way, our mind is like a little child and just does whatever it wants: it has no discipline or sensitivity for a situation or context but just reacts. Any of you who are parents will know that when a child is spoiled, the parents don't suffer as much as the child does when it grows up. We find ourselves in a similar situation with our own minds. In Buddhism at least, we feel it is very, very important to train the mind because the lack of satisfaction and the absence of meaning in our lives basically comes from the absence of mindfulness, from the lack of presence with what we are doing. And the only purpose of the very elaborate code of ethics taught in Buddhism is to encourage the individual who has taken ordination to be completely mindful of how he or she is acting in every situation. We return to Je Milarepa's song and understand why he sang: "Oh, I don't know what spiritual discipline is. The main point is to tame the mind."

Let us turn our attention to the idea of suffering or dissatisfaction in life. Generally, when we are dissatisfied, we try to stop it. As soon as we are aware of injuries, we try to eliminate them in whichever way we may be able. We feel that if we stop the situation that is making us unhappy, we will be content again. This is a common feeling among most people, I think. This really isn't what is appropriate, though, because there is nothing to be stopped in suffering and dissatisfaction. Suffering and dissatisfaction are effects: if we avoid the effects, then nothing has really been gained because the source remains. So, we can imply a very simple principle: If there is no source, then there is no result, and, if we can remove the source of dissatisfaction, then there won't be any dissatisfaction and we won't have to give up anything or eliminate those things which are not satisfying.

Let me present an example. A tree has branches and roots. If we liken dissatisfaction to the

branches – the results or effects – we could cut the branches away but would never have removed the tree, the source. However, if we were to cut the roots of the tree, then it would wither and we consequently wouldn't have to worry about the branches. This is the reason why the Buddha taught what is known as the four noble truths in the first cycle of teachings he presented,<sup>vii</sup> which are primarily concerned with the issue of dissatisfaction in our lives.

### **The First Noble Truth**

*"We need to know about the truth of suffering."*

The first of the four noble truths is the truth of suffering. Lord Buddha taught that suffering is not something to be avoided or stopped but should be known, understood, and acknowledged. In the acknowledgement of the truth of suffering there comes an understanding that suffering or dissatisfaction has a source, the second truth.

### **The Second Noble Truth**

*"We need to abandon the origin of suffering."*

The second of the four noble truths describes the source of suffering. Lord Buddha taught that the source of suffering is the conditioning effects of our actions concerning the way we experience the world, which is karma, the "infallible law of cause and effect." He showed that the disturbing emotions within lead us to act in a given manner. We find the origin of dissatisfaction and pain we experience lies in our emotions.

So, in the description of the source of dissatisfaction, the Buddha discussed the notion of karma, of "action," and the way it functions as a seed and develops through conditions and into an experience.

To go over the process by which this takes place very briefly: we find ourselves clinging to a sense of a self, but in truth we cannot really establish an actual self present. The notion of a self is basically an expression of the various psychophysical constituents, called the five skandhas in Buddhism.<sup>viii</sup> Based on the skandhas, we find the propensity to interpret experience in terms of subject and object, i.e., we grasp at external objects as though they exist in themselves and at our own sense of a self as something that is present and perceives external objects. From that duality, mind's natural activity manifests as disturbing emotions, for example, as anger against those things or persons which or who undermine our sense of a self, or, as attachment for those things or persons which or who support our sense of a self.

We talk about the three mind poisons in Buddhism. The fundamental poison is ignorance, not

understanding what we are. Not understanding what we are gives rise to the sense of ourselves as somebody, the basis for attachment and aversion. Ignorance, attachment, and aversion are the three poisons that become stimulations. They motivate us to act in various ways, which is what karma, the truth that every action brings about an effect, really means. The effect of all actions establishes certain propensities or tendencies within us. This process is what karma in truth means.

Many people think karma is some kind of entity that mysteriously operates as some kind of physical or external force. Should karma be something substantial then we could just throw it away or easily eliminate it. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Karma describes the way our mind operates, the way we ourselves operate and function. Karma is the propensity, the *habitual patterns* which determine our lives. This makes it very, very difficult to become free of the effects of our actions because they are tendencies established in our mind, in our hearts.

Consider someone who becomes addicted to alcohol or drugs. In the beginning, there is no particular pattern, but gradually they drink more and more and develop the propensity to the point where drinking becomes a habit. They are eventually addicted, and it is extremely difficult to give up addictions that have become a pattern operating within. Essentially, we too are addicted to act the way we do. We can do good and we can do evil. Every action we perform, anything we do establishes specific patterns within us and those habitual patterns are stored in the heart of our being, referred to as the *ground consciousness*, closely related to the *Buddha nature*.<sup>ix</sup> Since habits are deeply ingrained in our ground consciousness, the conditioning effects are also deeply established within us.<sup>x</sup> This is the reason it is very difficult to become free of the effects of our very own actions.

### **The Third Noble Truth**

*"We need to accomplish cessation."*

As long as we remain in a confused state and unconsciously react to the numerous patterns present within us, we will never experience freedom from conditioned effects or karma and will continue creating our own dissatisfaction, pain, and suffering. Thus, from the Buddha's point of view, our attention needs to be directed towards putting an end to the stimulus that leads us to act in such a way that we incessantly create misery. We cannot just stop the process by saying so; it is a gradual approach.

In order to eliminate the origin of suffering, we need to follow a way or a path that will definitely lead to the result, freedom from bondage. So, we come to a notion of a way of life, of a way of acting, called "the path," which is a very important theme in Buddhism.

In the Buddhist tradition, there are many different paths rendering such help to us. We have already discussed the ethical approach associated with the various ordinations, a very concrete framework to develop mindfulness. Furthermore, meditation practices enable us to understand that neither the individual nor the world as we perceive it have a determinative existence, known technically as “the two aspects of non-self.”<sup>xi</sup> We may also engage in the practices in which we attempt to exchange our own happiness for the suffering of others, a practice called “*taking and sending*.” We may focus our mind on understanding *emptiness* and what it means in relation to the ultimate nature of our experiences in the world. These practices are all integrated in the *Mahayana* or “great vehicle” of Buddhism.<sup>xii</sup>

In the Tibetan tradition, we also have what is known as *Vajrayana* or “the diamond, the indestructible vehicle,”<sup>xiii</sup> in which we employ an expression of the awakened mind, called *yidam* or “the form of a deity,” in practice. By developing a relationship with a specific form of value, we come to be able to transform our experience of the world from one of impurity and dissatisfaction into one of pure openness and fullness.<sup>xiv</sup>

We see that there are many different approaches and paths within Buddhism, whereas the purpose of all is to overcome deeply ingrained habitual patterns within us. We simply base our perception on constructive patterns and seek to make them a part of our lives through wholesome actions of body, speech, and mind.

The purpose of establishing constructive patterns within us is to overcome and eventually eliminate destructive patterns. The key to engage in this process of training is mindfulness, a mindfulness aware of what we do at all times and aware of what we need to refrain from, taking care in all we are and do.

We may furthermore strive to apply another element of practice known as “the awakening mind” in the great vehicle, where we seek to reverse the obsession of self-importance by focusing our attention on the well-being of others. Employing awakening mind introduces a valuable factor to our practice of mindfulness.<sup>xv</sup>

### **The Fourth Noble Truth**

*“We need to apply the path.”*

We have discussed the third truth and will now turn our attention to the truth of the path, or the way to eliminate the basis for dissatisfaction in ourselves, the fourth truth, which concerns the result, fruition. The third truth showed that when the source of dissatisfaction and pain is eliminated from within us, then dissatisfaction and pain don’t arise and we find in ourselves peace and happiness. When you are free of confusion and the habitual patterns as an

expression of it, then unhappiness and misery simply don't come up. When that is achieved, our Buddha nature, the potential to become awakened that is present in all beings without exception, becomes fully manifest.

The Buddha nature is replete with many wonderful qualities and abides within each and every being without difference. These qualities of value are not manifest due to the discussed destructive mental patterns. When we practice the path of meditation, the habitual patterns are eliminated and all qualities naturally present within all of us become perfectly manifest and operational in the world. Qualities are very beneficial, not only for ourselves but for everyone we come into contact with, we could say, for everyone in the world.

You are all aware of the title of this talk, "The Buddha Nature." The potential for awakening abides in every living being non-differentiate since beginningless time. In itself, it has never been obscured or blemished in any way. Whatever is unpleasant and unsatisfactory in our lives comes from karma, from our long-standing habitual patterns, and from our disturbing emotions – the incidental or adventitious impurities obstructing the pure essence from naturally expressing itself. The incidental stains are not our true nature and consequently can be cleared away. Then our Buddha nature manifests without impediment.

### **Conclusion**

We are in truth concerned with training the mind in Buddhism. This training does not refer to an external source, change, or activity. It cannot be imposed upon us or sought as something outside ourselves. Training the mind means cleansing our situation in which we find ourselves, in which our mind has no control or intrinsic presence. Mind continuously loses itself in the many emotional disturbances and distractions arising from within.

We cleanse ourselves by treading the path of mental improvement and integrate our experiences in all we are and do. The essence of every practice is mindfulness and restraint, being aware of what we are doing and being cautious in all situations that confront us. All destructive patterns in us eventually cease and we realize what we, and what all things really are. We become free of ignorance, emotional disturbances and unhappiness, which arise from ignorance. This is the true purpose of training the mind.

Closing here, I would like to be available for questions any of you may have

## Questions

**Question:** Rinpoche, I've always had confusion between the relationship of the intellectual teachings of Buddhism and the meditative teachings or practices, the relationship between these two things and the way in which we behave. Are these two things two paths that lead to the same goal? Are they two paths that lead to different goals? I have a difficulty bringing them together.

**Rinpoche:** We need both. We actually have two different approaches in Buddhism. We say there are those who pursue practices on the basis of an outlook; they develop an outlook first, which is what you meant by an intellectual understanding. Or there are those who embark on a practice and from that develop a certain outlook or understanding of the world. In fact, there are three elements that are very important. There is the outlook or how we regard the world, there is cultivation in the form of practice, and there is our behavior, what we actually do. One way to describe this is: the outlook provides the framework for practice; cultivation is the practice itself; and as cultivation comes into experience, we exercise that in all we are and do.

It is extremely important for all three elements to be present in the process of purification. But, you said these two don't seem to go together. I'd like to ask you, why don't they go together?

**Student:** I guess it's not that they don't go together, it's just that sometimes I think that only an intellectual understanding might be enough to say, "Yes, I see what you're saying. I understand what you're saying." At other times I realize it's just the first layer of the onion. I never come to one conclusion about this.

**Rinpoche:** Basically, an intellectual understanding is very important but doesn't lead us to an operative understanding. Let's compare it with recognizing and knowing a person. Simply seeing a person isn't the same as knowing them. Recognizing a person corresponds with intellectual appreciation, very important and helpful, but it's not identical with actually knowing a person. An operational understanding of dharma comes from practice.

**Question:** Jesus had something to do with Buddhism being directly in India for a number of years with the Essenes. Could you tell us something about this?

**Rinpoche:** Like you, I have heard about these accounts but don't have any reliable information of them. From my observation of Christianity and its emphasis on helping and loving others, its emphasis on avoiding evil and on doing good, we find it very similar to what the essence of Buddhism actually is. So, I personally have a very high regard for Christianity.

**Question:** In these internationally troubled times, would you give us some value through your thinking?

**Rinpoche:** You are talking about the difficulties of experiencing the world as a whole in a period when we are encountering much dispute and differences. As individuals, we may not have much control or influence on the course of events; we do have within us the possibility of

developing a helpful and noble attitude towards the world though. Personally, I have great confidence and respect for the power of such a positive attitude. If you use it as a basis for formulating aspirations and good wishes about the course of events in the world, then they can come to fruition, which is the reason why a part of our practice is the constant formulation of such wishes for well-being in the world as a whole.

**Question:** Once I accompanied some Buddhist monks up a mountain and a Buddhist master was leading them. They walked for several hours and there was silence. They got to a large cliff and suddenly the Buddhist master turned and said to the monks: Two questions I have for you. Where was Buddhism before Buddha? And, where is Buddha now? I was wondering whether you could comment on that?

**Rinpoche:** Buddha is in our mind.

**Student:** The second question he asked was: Where is Buddha now? Is that the answer to the question?

**Rinpoche:** Yes.

**Student:** The first question was, where was Buddhism before Buddha?

**Rinpoche:** On the one hand, we could take Buddha in this question to mean the physical presence of Buddha Shakyamuni in the world or, to mean the teachings that he taught being present. This is not what the question really points to. What the question is pointing to is that the essence of the teachings is the way things actually are. So, the answer then is: all that we experience, which has always been there. This is where Buddhism is.

**Question:** Are you immortal?

**Rinpoche:** In the Tibetan tradition, the term "death" refers to the dissolution of the body. We say the mind is something that doesn't die. It's a very good question.

**Question:** If the mind is the ruler of the body and speech, and also you say this is Buddha, who or what is in the position to train the mind and what is the training?

**Rinpoche:** This is a very special quality of the mind. If you just let mind be, it goes wild. If you train the mind, then it becomes very pleasant.

**Student:** Who is "we"?

**Rinpoche:** Posing questions and answers such as "who" and "we" is based on the perspective that there is something which has to train the mind and that the self and the mind are different, basic duality. When one comes to understand mind itself, then the question of how the mind trains the mind doesn't occur.

**Student:** There are two different states, when the mind is wild and when it is trained. What is it that brings about the change?

**Rinpoche:** This is the special quality of the mind. We describe mind as being self-aware and self-luminous. Your question about what it is that makes the change from one state to another concerns mind itself. Does that answer your question?

**Student:** I'll think about it.

**Question:** Can you say, is the mind basically change, subject to time and conditioning?

**Rinpoche:** Initially, when one is practicing, engaging in the path of practice, the mind or the attitude in us seeking to make this kind of change is subject to conditions. As one progresses, it becomes free and ultimately does not depend on conditions anymore.

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- <sup>i</sup> There are ten etymological meanings of the term "dharma." It refers to: 1. Objects of knowledge. 2. The path. 3. Nirvana. 4. Mental objects. 5. Merit. 6. Life. 7. The excellent speech (of the sutras and melodious texts). 8. That which will arise. 9. Certainty (of karma or "the infallible law of cause and effect"). 10. One's tradition (of environment and class of being).
- <sup>ii</sup> 21,000 teachings on the Vinaya, 21,000 on the Sutra, 21,000 on the Abhidharma, and 21,000 in their combination. Their purpose is to eliminate the 84,000 types of disturbing emotions latent in one's mind.
- <sup>iii</sup> Disturbing emotions are kleshas that in Sanskrit means "pain, distress, and torment." This was translated as "afflictions" which is the closest English word to what causes distress. However, the Tibetan word for kleshas is "nyon mong" and means "physical or mental misery, distress and misfortune. This almost always refers to passion, anger, ignorance, jealousy, and pride, which are actually negative or disturbing emotions so we prefer the translation negative or disturbing emotion since "afflictions" imply some kind of disability. The Great Tibetan Dictionary for example defines "nyon mong" as, "mental events that incite one to non-virtuous actions and cause one's being to be very unpeaceful."
- <sup>iv</sup> In the East, as in classical times, it is thought that the mind resides in the heart rather than the brain. This is why when we say "in my heart" or "heartfelt" we are referring to emotions and strong thoughts.
- <sup>v</sup> Milarepa, (1040 - 1123) one of the greatest yogis and saints of Tibet and forefathers of the Kagyu lineage. He attained perfect enlightenment in that lifetime and expressed his realization and taught through spontaneous songs. Refer to, *The Life of Milarepa*. Lhalungpa, Lobsang P. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1985. *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*. Chang, Garma C.C. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 1999. *The Life and Spiritual Songs of Milarepa*. Thrangu Rinpoche. Auckland: Zhisil Chokyi Ghatsal Publications, 2003.
- <sup>vi</sup> The Buddhist teachings are often divided into the Tripitaka, meaning three sections: The Vinaya-pitaka is the excellent word of the Buddha that mainly teaches training in ethics. The Sutra-pitaka is the excellent word of the Buddha that mainly teaches training in mental absorption. The Abhidharmapitaka is the excellent word of the Buddha that mainly teaches training in superior knowledge. These make up the 84,000 teachings: 21,000 teachings of the Buddha concern the Vinaya. 21,000 the Sutra, 21,000 the Abhidharma, and 21,000 of all three in combination.
- <sup>vii</sup> The Buddha's teachings occurred in three important phases, known as the three *dharmachakras* or three turnings of the wheel of dharma. The first turning includes the teachings common to all traditions, those of the Four Noble Truths, the Eight-fold Path, selflessness and impermanence, which can lead to liberation from suffering. The second turning expanded on the first, the fruition of its teachings on the emptiness of all phenomena and universal compassion is Buddhahood. The teachings of the third turning are those on the Buddha potential and its inherent qualities. For a detailed account of the three wheels of dharma see Thrangu Rinpoche's *The Three Vehicles of Buddhist Practice* published by Nammo Buddha Publications.
- <sup>viii</sup> The skandhas refer to the five principal mental and physical constituents of a being: form, sensation, recognition, mental events, and consciousnesses. The Tibetan word "phung-po" literally means "a heap" but has the meaning of "aggregation."

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- <sup>ix</sup> The unchanging nature of the mind is called “the pure all-basis” or Buddha nature, as opposed to the “all-basis or ground consciousness,” one of the eight consciousnesses (the other seven are the five sense consciousnesses, mental consciousness, and the seventh or afflicted consciousness). The pure all-basis is mere cognition, fundamental jnana itself.
- <sup>x</sup> Habitual patterns. (Skt. *vasana*, Tib. *bakchak*) Latent imprints that enter the eighth (ground) consciousness through the seventh (the afflicted) consciousness. These imprints are not apparently the experience itself, but are described more like dormant seeds that are away from soil, water, and sunlight. These imprints are either positive, negative, or neutral depending upon whether they came from a positive, negative, or neutral thought or action. These imprints are then activated with experience and thus help create our impression of the solidity of the world. There are actually several kinds of latencies: latencies which are associated with external sensory experiences, latencies which give rise to the dualistic belief of “I” and “other,” and positive and negative latencies due to our actions which cause us to continue to revolve around and around in samsara.
- <sup>xi</sup> There are two kinds of non-self – the selflessness of other, that is, the emptiness of external phenomena and the selflessness of a self, that is, the emptiness of a personal self. The selflessness of the person asserts that when we examine or looks for the person, we find that it is empty and without self. The person does not possess a self (Skt. *atman*, Tib. *bdag-nyid*) as an independent or substantial self. Most Buddhist schools hold this position.  
The selflessness of phenomena doctrine asserts that not only is there the selflessness of the person, but when we examine outer phenomena, we find that external phenomena are also empty, i.e. they do not have an independent or substantial nature. This position is not held by the Hinayana (shravaka and pratyekabuddha) schools, but is put forth by the Mahayana schools.
- <sup>xii</sup> Mahayana is “the excellent teachings to mainly train in the ethics of benefiting others and in realizing the selflessness of all phenomena.” Hinayana, in contrast, “is the excellent teachings to mainly train in binding negative conduct and in realizing the selflessness of the subject.” – *Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*
- <sup>xiii</sup> There are three main traditions in Buddhism, Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. While Tibetan Buddhists actually practice all three levels, Tibet is one of the few traditionally Buddhist countries which practice the Vajrayana.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Yidams are personal deities of meditation practice and the root of accomplishing value of being. They embody the true nature of the mind of a practitioner. Through the methods of meditating on a yidam, erroneous thoughts are overcome by employing correct conceptual concepts.
- <sup>xv</sup> Awakening refers to noticing whatever takes place in the mind, be it stillness or agitation arising from thoughts. Awakened mind is free of thoughts and simultaneously cognizes whatever is present.