



## The Essence of Dharma is the Essence of Dharma

by

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The essence of dharma is a very simple way to describe what so called 'Buddhism' is. Buddhism is almost a nickname, because Prince Siddhartha reached Buddhahood, and his teaching, people call it 'Buddhism'. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is a nickname. Here in India, if you sell tea, you are called 'chai (tea) walla (person)'. So calling the teachings of Lord Buddha 'Buddhism' is like calling somebody who sells tea 'chai walla'. It's okay. In traditional Tibetan terms we call it *nangpa sangyepa*. *Nang* means inside, in, and *pa* means *walla*. *Sangye* means Buddha and *pa* again means *walla*. I don't know how to describe 'walla' in English, but if you are English then would we say 'Englishpa'. It means person. In Tibetan male is *pa* and female is *ma*. Somebody who offers flowers we call *metokma* (*metok* is flower), and if somebody is Tibetan we call them *Böpa*—*Bo* means Tibet. So that is *nangpa sangyepa*, that is what it means. Dharma is Sanskrit, not just a Buddhist term, and I am sure it is a Hindu term today also.

Now when you reach so called Buddhahood it doesn't mean you reach the realization of only good things, you reach the realization of the essence of all good things, the essence of all bad things, and the essence of all so-called neutral things, everything. You cannot have a Buddha who is ignorant about everything except the good things. So Buddha by definition is realizing the essence of all dharma. Therefore the essence of all dharma, where is it? Where is the essence of all dharma? The essence of all dharma is in us. For me the essence of all dharma is in me and for you the essence of all dharma is in you, in your being. Then, the essence of dharma cannot be different from the essence of dharma of everyone. If you realize the essence of you, you become Buddha just like Gautama or Shakyamuni, but you will not be called Gautama Buddha because that is not your name, you will be called by your name or your surname—Shakyamuni or Gautama or Siddhartha

So this is what Buddhism is all about. Of course we have dogma, we have infrastructure, we have hierarchy, we have rituals and of course we have ascetics who are not involved in hierarchy and all these things. But regardless of all of that it doesn't make any difference to the essence, but it is sometimes helpful at some stage for us to have hierarchy, ritual and dogma etc. For example, if you have a 100-storey building with 10,000 rooms you have to have an elevator, and if your elevator buttons don't have numbers and your floors don't have numbers and your rooms don't have numbers, then how are you going to function? To find

your friend you would have to search from top to bottom, room by room and knock on each door. But still you might not find them because while you are searching on one floor your friend could have gone to another floor which you have already searched. Therefore, hierarchy, ritual, infrastructure, all of these things are necessary, but once you reach beyond that and once you have the capacity to know what is what and who is where, then you don't need it. You know where your friend is and you just go to that floor and you go to that room and you say hello to your friend. You don't need an elevator, you don't need button numbers, you don't need room numbers, you just know, but until you reach that state you need all these numbers.

This way then 'nangpa sangyepa', or Buddhism, with due respect, this nick-name, which we are so used to and which is okay, it's absolutely okay. So in Buddhism, for example with practice, first of all we are in the depth of samsara. Previously when referring to being in samsara I said 'flat like a chapatti', but actually that is not a correct description, we are like a toasted sandwich in a toasted sandwich maker, because a chapatti has only one side on the fire, the other side is not, but a toasted sandwich in a toasted sandwich maker has all sides being burnt. So we are like that. From inside, from outside, from the top, from the bottom, from all directions we are in samsara.

When we are in that, then the first step of dharma practice is to come out of that. So Buddha taught us what is good and what is bad. Buddha taught us about suffering, the causes and conditions of suffering, and how to overcome them—don't do this, don't say that, don't eat this, don't eat that, walk this way, don't walk that way, etc. So that is the first step, because we have to get out of this mess. So how does a toasted sandwich get out of the sandwich maker? It has to be well done first, and then automatically it opens up and a person takes it out. Therefore we need external help, so somebody up there, Buddha—Buddha please bless me, please help me. We have to do all sorts of things because we are desperate at that stage.

Once we are out of that, then instead of thinking about our suffering, thinking about 'help me', then 'I help'. So first I have to be helped because I'm not capable of helping others, because I'm inside the toaster—I have to be out of it in order to even think clearly. But once I'm out of it, then I can think of helping others who are in the same situation in which I was in.

Then the second stage of Lord Buddha's teaching manifests, which is not 'this is good, this is bad, don't do this, don't do that, because this causes you suffering, that frees you from suffering'. That is not so relevant at the second stage because you are out of that already. So the second stage of what is right and what is wrong is: what causes others suffering is wrong and what causes others to be free from suffering is right. So the wrong and right is there, but it has this different perspective. What is wrong for me, what is right for me is first, but now, what is wrong for me to do for others and what is right for me to do for others, for their sake, is second.

After that has matured, after that is accomplished, then the third stage: what am I, what is everyone, what is this happiness, what is this suffering? What is freedom from suffering? How come there is something called bad and something called good? Where does it come from, what is it all about? Then those questions and answers and that practice becomes relevant. So it is step by step. That is what we call 'three yanas': Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. If we simplify everything, that is what it is, and it has nothing to do with anything other than the truth of everything. One very basic truth is: no matter who you are talking to, even the most insane person, when it comes to them, you cannot find anyone who likes to suffer. And you cannot find anyone who doesn't like to be happy. That is the bottom line. That's it.

There might be people who like to cause suffering to others because that makes them kind of big and happy, you know, crazy people. But when it comes to them, do they like to be poked with a needle in their eyes? No, definitely not. This way there is no-one from heaven to hell who likes to suffer and who doesn't like to be happy, that is natural, that is the foundation of all dharma.

Why it is nangpa, inside, is because otherwise it is *chyipa*, outside—*chyi* means out, outside. So whoever is not 'nangpa', is 'chyipa'. Who wishes to be free from suffering is the same, who likes to be free is the same and who likes to be happy is the same. But the solution is inside, the potential is inside, 'nangpa'. The solution is outside, the potential is outside, 'chyipa'. So 'chyipa' and 'nangpa', that is the difference.

Now chyipa, you might call it materialism or whatever you call it, but that is looking for a solution from outside. If you want to be happy, if you want to be free from suffering, if you want to be free, then you look for the solution outside of you. That of course can free you from suffering temporarily, and can make you happy temporarily, but it always evolves and changes. Today's happiness is tomorrow's suffering.

There is a term in the dictionary called 'fed up'. Nobody is fed up with anything the first time, but after the second time, the third time, or the fourth time then you get fed up! Also the definition of ambition; positively speaking it is inspiration and negatively speaking it is ambition. That is there in the dictionary, it means you are better than yesterday, but you can still be better. So tomorrow it's the same thing, you can be better than the day before, you can be better, there is no end to it. For example, first you want a bicycle, then you want a scooter, then you want a motorcycle, perhaps a Yamaha. Then perhaps a Maruti 800, then a Zen, after that a Qualis, after that maybe a Toyota car. After that maybe a cheap Mercedes, second hand perhaps, then after that a brand new luxury Mercedes, then you can go up to a Bentley or Rolls Royce, then a helicopter. After that a Beachcraft plane, then a cheap private jet, then an expensive private jet which seats eight people, after that twelve people. After that

we want a whole airplane with a bath, swimming pool, shower, bedroom and kitchen, everything. There is no end. If you don't say 'enough' then there is no end.

So that is 'chyipa'—you are looking for your happiness, joy, satisfaction and contentment from outside. Nangpa is from inside, so we are more calm, we are more in harmony, we are more content and we do things very clearly with a clear understanding of why we are doing what we are doing. Even if you want to have a Mercedes that is fine, but you have to have a very good reason, a very clear and worthy reason to have a Mercedes, otherwise it will go on and on. Actually I had a very good Mercedes but I got rid of it because it was very difficult, it was like keeping an elephant without a circus. I don't have a circus, so what is the point of keeping an elephant and feeding it—even just cleaning it is a big deal. So it is like that. I saw a book once entitled *The Monk who sold his Ferrari*. I don't know what was inside it but I liked the title very much. So from some street sellers I bought a copy. I didn't read it but I liked it—I am the monk who sold his Mercedes! Anyway, that's my ego, but it was very interesting to see that book title, and street people selling it.

This way I think we very humbly can say that what we as Buddhists following Lord Buddha's teachings are trying to achieve is nothing less and nothing more than the essence of all dharma, and the destination and purpose of all dharma. That is what we try to understand, that is what we try to achieve, that is what we try to realize. And when that happens, in the beginning stages we will call ourselves a first level bodhisattva, a second level bodhisattva etc, and when that happens absolutely, then we are Buddha, we reach Buddhahood. So that is... I can't say my understanding, I realize I say that a lot, that is very presumptuous, but this is what my masters tried to teach me and that is what I have received from the teachings and transmissions of all of my masters, my dharma masters intentionally and my non-dharmic masters unintentionally.

This way some people say Buddhism is not a religion and so it should not be an 'ism'. From this point of view I agree, but nothing is wrong with the 'ism' either. We should not worry too much about the 'ism' because the essence of 'ism' is the essence of 'ism'. So you can be Buddha-ism, Hindu-ism, all kinds of 'ism'. That is okay because the essence of it is the essence of it.

Now in this manner, having said that, we look back into the reality of ourselves as human beings of planet Earth, our kind of human being. We are all similar, but I cannot say we are all the same because each one of us sees and hears everything differently. For example, if my mind could enter your mind, or anybody's body and hear with your ears, see with your eyes, taste with your tongue, it would be very, very different from how I hear, see, smell and taste, absolutely I'm sure. So in some ways each of us are different, but still pretty much the same. We all see something and say, "Oh, that's very big". Or we all see something and say, "Oh,

that's very small". Or we all see something and say, "Oh, that's very nice" or "That's terrible". So it will be kind of similar but not exactly the same, that is impossible, it cannot be. Even in a photo-lab, if you develop a negative one hundred times—make a hundred copies of a picture of one negative—if you look carefully, none of them will be the same in colour, texture and everything, impossible. Even if the person had a hundred machines and each time put the same amount of everything in and printed only one copy, then took the negative out and put it in another one and make one copy, even if they worked that way it would still not be the same. Of course if you put a negative in one machine and make a hundred prints it will not be the same because the first time there will be a lot of everything, then the second time a little less, then less and less etc. Also heat, there would be more, the machine would get hotter. So it would not be same. But even if you use a hundred machines afresh, it will not come out exactly the same. A layman's eye might not see the difference, but if you really looked at it very carefully it would not be the same. That shows these things very clearly, but we all see in a similar way.

The definition of the most common thing, such as light and darkness, is a very simple thing. For example, I can see you because of light and also I see you because of darkness. If there was no darkness I could not see you. Except of what I see of you, the rest, inside of all that, is darkness. It is because of that darkness that I can see you, otherwise you would be transparent; you would not exist if you were all light and no darkness. Actually more than 99% of everything here is darkness and because of that I can see you. Only your surface is lit with light, and this kind of light cannot penetrate you more than a fraction, and inside of that is all dark. We say light is very powerful, but it is not, darkness is more powerful than light. Think of the Earth, only one side of the Earth, the surface, is exposed to light, and how far? Not even one inch deep. No matter how much light there is on Earth everything is penetrated by darkness. Then through the power of light and the power of darkness you can also see in the night. You see the moon light, just that, and from a mountain shadow to the moon, in between you don't see any light. You only see the light which is on the surface of the moon, and sometimes just a crescent.

Then if you look in the sky, we see so many little dots of light, that's all. They are suns. Some of them are many times bigger than our sun, but I cannot read a book by them, I need a torch or a candle. This way our illusion of light and darkness is such that we think light is greater and more powerful than darkness, but most of us have never even thought about what darkness is. We have thought a lot about light, but never about darkness. This shows how far-reaching or how deep our basic perception comprehends. Do we hear anything about the study of what darkness is, which can penetrate to the depth of the Earth, which can penetrate through the entire space, which penetrates through the body of each and everyone of us? Did we study this? I haven't heard about it. But maybe there is because my exposure to these things is very limited. But scientifically speaking there are so many things that we have never

thought about and so many things we don't know; we don't even know what we don't know.

So now, when we look at that, if we understand and know everything about everything, then we will realize that we will only know everything about everything as human beings of this planet Earth, of how our type perceives. It doesn't go beyond that. Human beings of this planet that are not of our kind, what they will see, what they will hear, we don't know. We don't even know they exist. Of course they have to exist, we are the proof—we exist, therefore they have to exist. Forget about all the other beings: animals, gods, asuras, hells, pretas, yamas, nagas, all kinds, and there is not only one type of these, there are many, many types of them, countless types of them.

Now the essence of dharma, forget about realization, even to know externally all that there is to know is impossible. But if we realize the essence of each one of us, truly, then we become Buddha. Then we more than know the essence of everything. That is the definition of omniscience, the definition of 'knower of the three times' (past, present and future) and the definition of primordial wisdom. This way the essence of dharma is the essence of dharma, and that can only be realized from within, not externally. That is absolutely impossible. But this is not discouraging; it is with great honour and great respect of the magnitude of every little thing. For example, I can say that it is so humbling to see one single grain of rice; it is impossible for me to know everything about a single grain of rice. Even if I study with the biggest machine and the best technology and all the information, I can never understand everything about a single grain of rice, even if I live for one million years with a clear mind. I mean without going senile. Most people go senile when they are around ninety, some even earlier. I'm halfway there, so maybe I am a little bit senile already! But no cause for worry yet, actually it's very comfortable when you forget things, you don't remember, it's blank; it's nice, I like it, thank you Buddha.

Anyway, this is so humbling when you realize the essence of dharma is the essence of dharma, in a very simple way. For example, if you see a stray dog walking on the street, thin and skinny, lost and afraid and looking for something, going dum, dum, dum, dum, dum, deep inside there is an ocean of wisdom, an ocean of potential. There is limitlessness in that dog, just like Buddha. That is very humbling to know. Maybe the dog doesn't know, or maybe the dog knows that already but doesn't look like he or she knows. But either way it is there, and when you see that, when you realize that, then that is what makes you have so called devotion or compassion. Until you see that your devotion or compassion is not really devotion or compassion, your devotion is something like admiration and your compassion is like some sort of pitifulness—poor thing, unfortunate thing, something like that. But when you have a deeper understanding then your compassion and devotion is so rich, but it has nothing to do with emotion, it is just enormous respect for what it is; that is devotion, and enormous respect for how it appears; that is compassion. This way I think the essence of dharma is the essence of

dharma makes sense.

I am quite sure many of you wondered what on earth I was going to say when I said 'the essence of dharma is the essence of dharma'. But I am very happy that I was able to share this. I have tremendous appreciation for all of my great masters through whose blessing I have a little bit of knowledge, which gives me enormous confidence, almost ego, to be able to talk about it, which is very humbling. Thank you.

If you have any questions you are welcome to ask. Relax and feel free to ask.

### Questions

**Question:** Rinpoche, since you have been talking about light and darkness and internal and external, I wanted to ask if you can explain about ....

**Rinpoche:** I have enough ego to say, 'yes I can' in advance (laughter)

**Same Student:** Can you please explain how the chain of origination function, which goes from primordial wisdom through the five wisdoms, and through that into the subtle elements and then the gross elements and perceived external matter? And what kind of role does ignorance and karma play in this?

**Rinpoche:** If I understood you correctly, I wouldn't say from and to, I would take that out. Then I think half of the question is answered there. Then the other half is: we are not believers of karma ultimately; we are believers of karma relatively. As long as we perceive everything in a dualistic way, then everything is karma, every single little thing. Some things we can call karma and some things not because of the magnitude, but in principle, everything is karma, there is nothing that is not karma. However many strands of hair you have on your head, each one of them is the result of millions of karmas. For example, it is said in the texts very clearly that in each of the feathers of a peacock, each strand of hair has perfect alignment of colour, and each one of those little hair particles is the result of countless karmas. And trying to find karma, trying to identify karma, is described as being more difficult than trying to find the traces of a bird that flew in the sky for millions of years—the bird would have flown one way, then another, then another etc, so to try to find all those traces is impossible! Like that you have to be omniscient to realize karma.

I think from what you are saying you know the answer, you know the question, but just want to be certain. The most effective way to answer ourselves or for us to answer somebody is, relatively everything is interrelated with everything, but ultimately everything is free from everything and there is no limitation. Anything that is interrelated is limited, is dependent. When you say dependent then freedom does not make any sense. Freedom is in-dependent. So ultimately the essence of everything is limitless freedom, but relatively everything is interrelated and interdependent, which is because of the basic perception of relative reality of

dualism, and that is ignorance.

The basis of ignorance is that we constantly encounter our primordial wisdom, which is limitless, but constantly we perceive it as 'I', which cannot be more limited. There is nothing more limited than 'I'. That is what we call ignorance.

When did it start? It never started. When will it end? It will never end. But what will happen is that you will have total realization of it and your ignorance, then the question of ending doesn't exist because it didn't even begin—the question of ending is irrelevant because it didn't even begin, ultimately. Buddha realized that, according to us, two thousand and five hundred and something years ago, but we are still here trying to follow his path to become like him. And that is our biggest blessing as well as our biggest obstacle, at the same time, because we are trying to become like him. That is pretty big dualism, 'we' try to become like 'him'. But that is the first step, the toasted sandwich has to come out from the toaster first. Therefore, wishing to become like him is the first step.

**Question:** Rinpoche, you said externally it's very difficult to know everything about everything.

**Rinpoche:** Not very difficult, impossible.

**Same Student:** So if one only knows everything about everything when one becomes omniscient then all the scientists who are, for example doing research and spending so much money, if instead they were to become Buddha, then they would be able to give us the solutions for the environment and for medicine, for so many things?

**Rinpoche:** You are correct, but the way you are saying it makes it very, very incorrect. Because...

**Same Student:** I mean they should realize Buddhahood instead of going and doing this.

**Rinpoche:** That is perfect; the first one was not perfect because it sounds like an unenlightened Buddha—you want a dualistic Buddha to tell you the solution is this etc, scientifically. Buddha will manifest, and we have that already. For example, if we try to know the origin of the universe we work very, very hard trying to find that, but we can never find the origin of the universe. Why? Because it didn't even begin, it is an illusion. It is like in a dream you try to find the origin of a mountain that you are dreaming. You could spend lots of dream money, make so many dream machines, take so many years of dream journeys, but it is a dream. So all of these things, the so called sun, the moon, the stars, this planet, human beings, animals, all of these things are the dream of each one of us. Each one of those things are the manifestation of the causes and conditions of countless lifetimes of karma. That way we will find something, but we cannot find everything.

The ultimate solution is to realize the essence of you. By realizing the essence of you, naturally, then you realize the essence of everything, but not dualistically. It is non-dualistic

realization. When Buddha taught it was not like, 'Now I have become Buddha and I am going to talk about this particular subject to these particular people and now I'm going to speak in English, then Hindi.' Buddha is manifesting even today, even now, somewhere, everywhere. Also Buddha did not die; the paranirvana of Buddha Shakyamuni at Kushinagar was just a manifestation—Buddha's nirmanakaya manifestation transformed into the sambhogakaya and dharmakaya. That is a very, very simplistic way of saying it, there is much more than that, even into the nirmanakaya as well.

But it is absolutely true that when a scientist reaches Buddhahood then everything for that scientist is solved. But I cannot say it exactly like that, then it becomes dualistic. Prince Siddhartha is already enlightened, but scientific answers are not solved for us, because we don't believe one hundred percent, so we have to see for ourselves, we have to have a microscope and all of that. In the Buddha's teaching everything is there, literally. If you read through the entire Tripitaka and tantra, everything is there. The answers are all there, but then that will be considered religion, that will not be considered as science. Therefore you have to spend millions and billions of dollars and millions and billions of man-hours to find out something.

**Question:** Rinpoche, there is this notion that we are helping others, or we are doing something, is it all a dream?

**Rinpoche:** Yes, it is all a dream, but that is a good dream to help us overcome the bad dream. And when we overcome the bad dream then there will be nothing but a good dream. Then when we overcome the good dream we are Buddha. So if somebody is hungry and we give them food, then that person feels comfortable and happy and it makes you feel happy and comfortable. That is good karma for you. That is also the good merit of that person, that you, a nice person came and gave them a nice meal. The karma is ripening for that person, and your karma ripened and you accumulated more positive karma. That way both sides evolve—the hungry person evolves from being a hungry person to a person with a full stomach, maybe only for a short time, but at least for that time.

So it's all part of the journey—everything that we are doing and we are not doing is part of our journey. Everything that we are doing or we are not doing has consequences. That is karma. It is not only things that we are doing; even things that we are not doing are also karma, because we become somebody who hasn't done that. I will give you a positive example, if you take a vow not to kill, then you will not kill. That is good karma. I hope it make sense?

But I think all of us have to come out of our cocoon step by step, one layer at a time. We all have billions of layers to our cocoons and we have to come out of it layer by layer. But we should be very happy, and we should think of it in a positive way—we are in front of the Buddha on a lotus with millions of petals and we are sitting at the core of it, fully ready to see

the Buddha. But it takes a long time to open each petal. So slowly, slowly opening it; each petal opens and we are closer to seeing the Buddha. Then when we see the Buddha, then we and Buddha become one. But it is not that we just see the Buddha and have a chit chat, "Hi Buddha, how are you, how have you been?", we become one.

**Question:** Rinpoche, how do we deal with anger?

**Rinpoche:** There are many ways. The best way to deal with any defilement is to say the simplest mantra and think about the meaning of that mantra. That is the easiest way. Another way is to just calm down and do good Shamatha.

**Same Student:** What mantra?

**Rinpoche:** Any mantra, OM MANI PEME HUNG, OM AH HUNG BENZRA GURU PEMA SIDDHI HUNG, NAMO SHAKYAMUNI. Each mantra has its own meaning, so think about the meaning. OM MANI PEME HUNG means 'may all sentient beings be free from anger, jealousy, ignorance, attachment etc., so that they will be free from the suffering of the six realms and, may they realize their ultimate primordial wisdom.' When we sincerely think about it there is no time to be angry so your anger is naturally gone, unless somebody really pokes you and is trying to make you angry.

All defilements are the same, anger, attachment etc, all of these are the same. Some people have a little bit more problem with anger, others with attachment, others with jealousy. Also different occasions and different environments make it that way.

**Question:** When you see somebody angry and that upsets you, is that your own anger which is reflected?

**Rinpoche:** Not necessarily. Sometimes it is, sometimes it is not. If somebody is angry because you have done something, then it has something to do with you. But if somebody is angry and that has nothing to do with you, then it has nothing to do with you.

**Same Student:** How you can help that?

**Rinpoche:** If it has something to do with you then don't do that—don't do something that makes somebody angry. Otherwise, whatever makes that person angry, you should know and you should try to help that person by undoing that. Sometimes our habit of... I have a nickname for it but the real thing is not taking responsibility. For example, I know I am sick because I drink too much coca cola, but I don't want to think that way so I think that there is something wrong with me and I have to see a doctor. But actually, if I just stop drinking coca cola I will be okay. But we don't want to believe that because we like coca cola a lot. But it's not me, I am just giving you an example. I don't want you to bring me boxes and boxes of coca cola as an offering. But it is something like that, people have this habit, and they manage to hide it so well, even from themselves. That way it is difficult for you to find out.

So if you cannot find out then the best or only way is just to be positive... actually I don't like to use this word 'energy' very much because I'm not into these New Age things, but be

positive and compassionate around the person so that it will somehow be like pouring cold water into boiling water. It is like if you are angry at somebody and then the other person is smiling and being kind and nice, then you cannot go on. You will give up, the anger just disappears. There are many ways but this is one way. Also sometimes it can simply be because of a very silly reason, some silly misunderstanding.

**Same Student:** Like when you see somebody getting angry and it seems that they are getting angry with a very minor thing. And you know the anger is not good for them.

**Rinpoche:** Yes, also it is a karmic thing, because once you indulge something like anger then you become good at it and it is easy to get angry. There is no such thing as you are angry and you finish your anger and your anger battery is off. It will become more and more, not less and less, and it can even be a habit. Some people like to raise their voice, that is their habit. Also some people want to be very polite, so polite that it really irritates you. That is also a habit. I would say that is a good habit, but sometimes you like a little bit of frankness, not boldness, but just not so much of the politeness. So it depends on who and why and how, it depends on all of that.

**Same Student:** It can vary?

**Rinpoche:** Yes, it will vary, and then you deal with it case by case. I don't think there is a uniform method. I find for most people talking is very important, especially in city life. You have to talk to the person, talk it out. That is very important, most of the time. But for some people it is better not to talk, just leave them alone, because talking brings up so many things and if somebody wants to misunderstand and misinterpret, then anything you say can be misinterpreted. So then less talking may be better. But it depends.

**Question:** Does that apply to all the other delusions as well?

**Rinpoche:** Everything, jealousy and anger are very much related.

**Same Student:** Do all of them boil down to anger? Most of them like...

**Rinpoche:** It depends.

**Same Student:** It manifests as anger very easily. Like if you don't get what you want you get angry etc. So it comes down to anger?

**Rinpoche:** Not exactly, for me it's different. When so many things happen I feel sleepy, I just want to close the door and go to sleep—too many things, too complicated, now give me two hours I want to sleep. So it depends, it becomes so boring and... sometimes anger of course, but most of the time it is so silly, just nonsense. You try to explain, you try this way and that way, but still you cannot get through. Then the person gets more and more emotional, then I yawn, I like to have a nice sleep, a nap because it cannot make me angry when it is so silly.

Also people go through phases in their life, they might feel insecure or something. That might also bring certain kinds of defilements and emotions, it's possible. There I think people have to feel secure. For me, fortunately I can say that it is very silly, because for me, knowing that I have Buddha nature and everybody has Buddha nature, it doesn't matter what happens to us,

the primordial wisdom, nothing can touch it, that is the ultimate confidence for me. That way people feeling insecure doesn't make much sense to me, but still we somehow forget our Buddha nature, and when we forget it then we feel insecure about something.

**Question:** Rinpoche, what does it mean to maintain pure samaya with the guru, and why is that so important in Vajrayana Buddhism?

**Rinpoche:** Samaya by definition means commitment, honour. Samaya is Sanskrit, in Tibetan it is *damtsig*—*dam* means sacred and *tsig* means word. I translate it as a sacred word of honour. That means, for example, if I say "I sincerely and voluntarily from this day on will say this prayer three times a day as long as I live," then that's a sacred word of honour. If I say it to my guru then it is a sacred word of honour with my guru. Then if I don't honour that I have broken my samaya of that sacred word of honour, which is no good, because then your word of honour doesn't mean anything. For a person without a sacred word of honour, who does not uphold their sacred word of honour, it is very difficult to progress, and even in a worldly sense they are not reliable. I mean, do you trust a person who cannot keep his or her word? No, you cannot. That way, in a spiritual sense, your progress is not a matter of trust or not, but your progress will not happen because you don't keep up your commitment. The sacred word of honour has many, many levels, but that is one example.

Then tantric samaya is a very, very serious thing, and there are several stages. When people don't acknowledge their tantric samaya... you cannot say with guru or with deity or with protector or with all sentient beings, it's all the same. There are four stages, and when you are finished, when you reach the fourth stage, it is very, very hard to mend or fix. The four stages are like something is bent, something has cracked, something is broken, and one piece went ten kilometres in one direction and another piece went fifty kilometres in another direction; then you can't even find the pieces. So it is like that, with four stages, the first stage is like a bend, we can straighten it; the second stage is like a crack, still you can fix it; the third stage is broken, but still you can fix it; but the fourth stage is like one piece went one way and another is thrown another way, then you can't even find the pieces, or they are very hard to find. There are many stages like that in tantric samaya, and it is very important.

**Question:** Could you please define very briefly these four stages?

**Rinpoche:** I dare not define further that that, why? Because if I talk too much about it then you all know, then if you don't acknowledge it you might break it.

**Same Student:** I am a little bit concerned about whether I am at the bent stage, the cracked stage or....

**Rinpoche:** Don't worry, you don't know so that's good. When you are ready to know then you should know. Then once you know you are almost there, and once you know, if you don't uphold it, then you are cracking it and bending it right away. This way, at this stage, how much you know is good enough for you. You are doing your best and leave it there. But when

the time comes for you to know, then you should know.

It is like a tiger eating a rabbit, a human killing a rabbit, a serious Buddhist killing a rabbit, and a monk killing a rabbit; these have so many differences. For a tiger a rabbit is just running bread who will not co-operate—it is running here, running there, a very annoying piece of bread. A tiger doesn't understand that a rabbit has a mind, or that a rabbit will hurt, it doesn't understand anything, it just sees running food, not even food, a running snack, that's it.

That's why tantra is sometimes described as secret. It's not secret because there is something to hide, but until you are ready for certain stages then it should not be revealed to you, it is our duty. But when you are ready for it then we have to reveal it to you, that is also our duty. But I cannot judge anybody as to whether they are ready or not, but by knowing how many years someone has been in the dharma, by knowing how many practices they have done, that way then I have to judge. Because I don't know who is where—maybe you are way ahead, maybe you are just a beginner or maybe you are half way; that I cannot judge. But nobody should bite off more than what they can chew.

Also if by me telling you about samaya you end up breaking it, then I have responsibility. I become like my concept of corruption, the example of a bribe, the person who takes the money and the person who gives money are both criminals. The person who gives the money is not less corrupt than the person who takes the money. That way in tantra it goes both ways. It is a two-way highway, not one way.

**Question:** Rinpoche, you talked about six realms. In which realm do spirits and nagas live?

**Rinpoche:** If it is a poor spirit it will be a preta. And if it is a really suffering spirit then it can even be hell. If it is a little bit more well off spirit then it can even be a lower level god.

**Same Student:** Then what is a spirit?

**Rinpoche:** Spirit means sentient beings who do not have our kind of body but another kind of body. So those who are not human beings, who are not animals, are spirits. Humans are human, animals are animal, whether they like us or not, but if it is not human or animal then it is a spirit. We have spirits of dead people, spirits of mountains, spirits of rivers, spirits of trees—sometimes we even say 'god of the river', 'god of the tree', 'god of the mountain'—so all kind of levels.

**Same Student:** And nagas?

**Rinpoche:** The higher nagas are more like asuras and the lower nagas are like animals. Nagas are mostly two kinds—some can be devas, even considered gods, but most of the nagas are animals. A large number of nagas are asuras, and then some are gods, but most of them are considered animals. The naga kingdom is under the ocean with lots of riches and all of that—lots of serpents, half human, half fish, all of those are nagas.

**Question:** There is a spacewoman who has taken the Gita and an idol of Ganesha to outer space and people are thinking it is a meeting of eastern religion and science. How do you interpret this?

**Rinpoche:** For me, this lady is very devoted to Ganesh and has taken a Ganesh statue in the spacecraft, but there is an issue, that is, with spacecraft, in order to make everything successful—take off, complete the mission and come down and land safely—every single ounce and every single different shape has to be considered, every material has to be examined. It's not like you or I going to Calcutta and taking some statues in our handbags on the airplane. You are a scientist so you know this very well, it is a very serious thing, even one extra napkin has to be calculated otherwise it can cause enormous damage. Therefore, from that point of view, whoever or whichever organization, the company or whichever government body or private body who allowed this to happen, they have to spent lots of money and lots of man hours and lots of effort to allow it to happen, because the Bhagavad-Gita and a Ganesh you cannot use those for anything else. There is no use for these in space. You cannot eat these and they are not regular things that are needed there. Therefore they have done a lot of extra things to allow it to happen. From that point of view it is very significant, but other than that I don't see much of anything, because what is the difference between being here and being in space? There is no difference, we are always in space! In India, how many different gods do we have? And each one of them has so many statues here. So we are in a pretty big spaceship already (Earth), which is moving at many miles per second. It is a pretty fast spaceship we are in and it is moving constantly. So we are taking small statues from here, our big spaceship, into a small spaceship and travelling a little bit, which is not significant. But from the motivation, from the acceptance, and from allowing this to happen and willing to spend so much time and energy for allowing it to happen, it shows that scientists and people who are involved in this have a lot of respect for religion. It shows that. Whose spaceship is it?

**Student:** NASA.

**Rinpoche:** That means that the Hindu religion and NASA, the American science with its enormous infrastructure, took this very, very seriously and spent lots of time and energy allowing this to happen. So that is significant, very significant. But I am sure it cannot be a big statue, it must be very small, miniature, micro chips.

Actually now they have these things in micro chips. They have the whole Tripitaka that you can wear around your neck. So it could be like that, but still it is significant, because to put it into that is still a lot of work. It is very significant that way. Otherwise they would say, "No, this is not necessary, we need water, oxygen and all these other things, why waste so much time and energy putting these religious things in which have nothing to do with what we are doing." So it is very significant from that point of view.

**Question:** Is there any wisdom then in this great investment that humanity makes in external investigation?

**Rinpoche:** With all the due respect, and humility, and on top of that I reserve my right to be wrong, but with saying all of that, it only contributes to knowledge, it does not contribute to wisdom.

**Same Student:** That being the case, if it contributes only to knowledge, what is the utility or the benefit?

**Rinpoche:** Knowledge benefit.

**Same Student:** But if knowledge doesn't become wisdom then what is the benefit?

**Rinpoche:** A lot. For example, if I know how to drive a car then I don't need a driver. I can do it by myself, that's a plus.

**Student:** But that's not knowledge.

**Rinpoche:** It is knowledge.

**Student:** You can drive, you don't just know how. You can drive so that's wisdom.

**Rinpoche:** No, for me wisdom is not that. The difference between wisdom and knowledge is that wisdom cannot go, whereas knowledge can. For example, if I know how to fly a plane, or how to play piano, or how to sing opera, or how to dance ballet, if I know all of that, then one morning in a state of half sleep I drop my soap on the floor in the bathroom, slip and hit my head on the washbasin, I can forget everything. Then that knowledge is all gone, I'm a vegetable. But wisdom will stay from this life to the next life. That is the difference between knowledge and wisdom.

**Question:** So this investment into knowledge, would you comment on that?

**Rinpoche:** It is okay, it's good. Entire institutions are like that—all the teachers are paid, all the students pay a fee to get education; it is education for sale. There is no samaya, as we say, between the teacher and student. A student doesn't even know who his or her teacher is and a teacher doesn't know who his or her students are; therefore there is no transmission of wisdom, only knowledge.

Therefore you can be very, very learned, or a very, very highly paid CEO earning two million dollars a year plus maybe half a million dollars in bonuses and have limitless allowances, all of that, but if something goes wrong in your home you might jump out your office window. Then where is the wisdom? There is lots of knowledge but no wisdom. That's what I mean, knowledge and wisdom are different. You can have lots of knowledge but no wisdom, so then when it comes to some small problem you don't know how to handle it, you don't see it; you have so much emotion that you just jump out your office window and finish yourself off and you think that's the end. It's actually the beginning. So that is the difference.

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