

Relax and Release

Exploring the nature of attachment and how to release it.

With reference to the text '*A Brief Exposition of Mahamudra*' by Maitripa
(Chapter 12 of the book 'Simply Being' by James Low)

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Saturday Session One

Ok, so good morning, we have a little time together to find out more about our mind. I'll just say a little introduction and then we'll do some meditation. Yesterday evening we were looking at how what we take to be the objects out there in the world, what we take to be existing in itself, is interpreted and framed by our own way of thinking about it. This means the key to prison, if we are indeed in a prison and if we feel lost or confused or burdened by life, the key rests with us. It's not something we're going to find out there, because it's our own mental processes, our thoughts, memories, emotions which create a strong sense of 'this is how it is', 'this is how I am'.

Freedom begins with seeing

Therefore freedom begins with the capacity to see that what is arising in the mind is like a buffet. It's an ever changing array of dishes you can partake of or not. But we all suffer from an eating disorder. We're all addicted to eating crap. We like a lot of salt, a lot of fat, a lot of chocolate. This arises in the form of our neurosis, our habitual thoughts because we can never get enough of them. We consume more and more of the ideas which keep us in the same limited position. Therefore freedom begins with seeing I don't need to consume this, why would I need to have this? Why would I want to worry about things in life? Why would I want to go after ideas of the past as if something of true value could be found there. This is MY activity, I'M doing this as if reflecting on the past, the good times, the bad times, I could make myself happy or sad and that that would be meaningful.

Something is missing. What is missing? Because we exist as a subject in a world of objects, and one aspect of the objects is ourselves, we think about ourselves. I wish I had not done that, I must do something different. We try to correct ourselves, shape ourselves. I want to be a better person. Sounds very meaningful so I have to edit how I arise. It means basically I am a thing. I am this shape, this formation, this pattern formation, and I could improve it as if I were an interior designer. I think we'll change the colour of the walls, we put a new kind of floor down and then the room will be wonderful. So

we're going to do this to ourselves, take out the things we don't want, put in the thing we do want and then it will be a nice space to live in.

But unfortunately, whatever arises in the mind vanishes very quickly. So every time you decorate the room of yourself it starts to crumble, it starts to change. Something happens, and your beautiful peace becomes disturbed. In the Tibetan tradition there are many western people now who do the three year retreat and they have a lot of time to do practice. Then when they come out they find that actually life is very difficult. Quite possibly even more difficult than it was before they went into the retreat because they got used to a fixed environment where the variables could be contained and directed. Whereas in the big world things come from all directions, outer phenomena change, inner feelings and memories change, this is very dynamic.

Staying grounded with the space

So, if the world is going to move, the best friend is space. If you're doing dance improvisation or you're doing martial arts movement with a lot of people, the most important thing is to feel the space. Because if you feel the space, if you're grounded with the space, then there is movement in space. But if you forget the space, and you just lock onto the person, then you have a problem because as soon as they move you want to move. The space is your best friend. Because in space if they're moving and you maintain your stillness, you see how they're moving off balance. So it's exactly the same with our thoughts and memories and feelings. If we remain settled when the mind is moving, if you don't get involved you start to see that I don't have to be involved. I am habitually dependent on my thoughts and feelings to give me the sense 'I am me'. But when I don't do that I can be reborn. That is to say that I am not who I think I am. We are each a potential much bigger than we know. But the infinity of that potential is hidden by our fixation on our habitual constructions of ourselves and other people. So this is the basic frame of reference that we bring to the meditation. Because there's no point to meditate unless you have a map. The map is taught by the Buddha. He says that when we sit we're trying to do something. Often what we're trying to do is something as it were passive and uninvolved rather than actively involved.

Shamatha meditation: Introduction

The first meditation we do is a very familiar, staying peacefully or shamatha or shiné which simply means to not be carried away by whatever is arising, and we can do it with an object and without an object. So first we do it with an object which is the movement of the breath on the nostrils and the subtle sensation that creates. By bringing our attention to rest on this sensation we have a dynamic focus. That's very important. You can also use an external focus like a small stone or a small statue of the Buddha, or a letter. They appear anyway to be more static. The advantage of focusing on the breath is that it's dynamic. So if you get used to staying present with something which is movement, you have the co-presencing, the being there together of movement and stillness.

And that's so important when we're in daily life, when you walk down the street, there're cars, there're busses, there're people. All kinds of things are going on. Can we be calm with that? If we see that everything is arising and moving in space, and my body is also moving in space. I am this embodiment, and simultaneously I am not this embodiment. Because when the mind is resting in space it's not primarily identified with the body. That is to say that the body is the effulgence of space. It's a showing of space, just as the flower grows out of the ground. The ground has the potential to enrich and bring alive the potential of the flower. So the seed in the earth with the assistance of the rain and the sun, these factors move together and allow the growth of the flower. Just as the flower is coming out of that ground, so our thoughts, memories, feelings, come out of the ground of awareness. And the ground doesn't move but the flower is blowing in the wind and shaking. In that way the content of our mind, our memories, feelings are moving and moving in reaction to circumstances. That's why we can communicate with each other because we are touched and moved. Sometimes that feels upsetting or exhausting. *We say, enough! I don't want this, leave me alone.* It's never going to happen. We always have obligations and things we have to do. Movement is the body. Movement is the content of the mind. Memories, sensations and so on. The mind itself is still.

So when we're doing the practice we're bringing our focused attention onto this subtle sensation at the nostrils and we keep it there. We just let attention rest on that object. We don't have to do anything else. This is not

very complicated but it's almost impossible because the mind goes wandering off here and there. So we start to see the power of our involvement.

In the bus shelters in Geneva I see they have these big posters advertising vaping. And the slogan is, "Vaping has never been so easy." Then at the top it has a little sign that says, "This product contains nicotine." The next line underneath says, "Nicotine is addictive." So it's like that. We are educated people. Never in human history have we had so much ease of developing thoughts, we can make a lot of mental activity. It's never been so easy. But it's highly addictive.

So this is what we struggle with in this practice. We face our addiction. That attention, which could be clear, and simple and just fresh, becomes involved. Fall into the past, the future, some passing thought, and we have no freedom. So this practice is the beginning of freedom because it allows us to see that we are not free, that we are under the power of habit. When you're just wandering around or you're sitting in a cafe chatting with a friend, you don't see that you're not free. You're having a nice time, it's very easy, you look at the menu, *I'll have a cappuccino. No, I'll have a little black coffee.* You make your choices. I'm expressing myself. The words came out of my mouth. *Why did I choose that? I always choose that. I like it, that's why I choose it. I don't need to see the menu, I know what I like.* The menu is there. The whole world is our menu. There's so many possibilities. But, *oh! I know what I like.* So our habit formations, they're like our waiter in our local cafe, they know he always has a cappuccino. They bring it even as you're sitting down. This is what we find in the meditation, we get caught up in the familiar. Is that clear?

Now clearly we're going to use English this weekend so if anything I say is not clear or you want me to repeat it, please just let me know and I'll say it in another way or more slowly or someone can translate it into French for you.

Shamatha meditation: Instructions

We do some of the meditation. Sit in a comfortable way, first of all try to locate your skeleton. It's inside you, it's always been there. So the skeleton

should be doing the work. This is the weekend, holiday for the muscles. When your skeleton, which is very lazy tries to hide then the muscles have to do all the work. So now, come on skeleton! Just settle. The skull on the spine, the spine into the hips. So now the muscles should be loose, the diaphragm is loose. You want to be breathing in a relaxed easy way. The mouth can be a little open or closed as you like but the main focus is on the sensation so you have to have enough breath at the nostrils. The eyes are slightly open looking down the line of the nose, we're not looking at anything in particular we're just not trying to cut off into ourselves.

It's a big mistake in meditation to go into yourself because you don't live in yourself. The idea that you live inside you is a delusion. So connectivity, being part of the world is also how we do the practice. So the gaze slightly open, down the line of the nose, hands for this kind of practice, usually, in the lap, right hand on top of the left with the tips of the thumbs touching. Shoulders are open and dropped. We take this position and then we find our attention next to the sensation at the nostrils and then we rest it there. Whenever your mind, whenever you find that you've wandered off from this very gently bring it back.

The most important aspect of meditation is peace and kindness. We should always be peaceful and always be kind to ourselves. There are no mistakes, there are just movements of energy, it's not a big deal. You go off for a while, not a big deal. As soon as you recognise it you come back to the breath. Blaming, judging, deciding you're going to do better, decide you want to try harder, all of that is unhelpful because it's intense. You're charging yourself up. And that's not the mood of the practice. The practice is peaceful. *Shiné* in Tibetan 'Shi' means peaceful and 'né' means to stay. We remain peaceful means not agitated. So tenderness towards oneself, kindness towards oneself is the mood in which all the burdens of the past can be allowed to fall away. So we do this practice for a little bit.

The two aspects of meditation: Lack and excess

So one of the things we might know in that kind of practice is the tendency to try to have more of, or to hang on to the aspects we like, and a tendency to reject or get rid of the aspects we don't like. These two movements you see described in many, many traditional meditation texts. And essentially

they are dealing with these two aspects of lack and excess. We feel something is missing and so we seek to fill ourselves with something we want. Or we feel we have too much of something, maybe a negative thought or a thought we don't like to have or something unhappy and we want to get rid of it. We can of course study these things again and again.

But it's only when we go into the meditation practice itself that we see this is not theory, this is the truth of my life that I am involved in this endless task of editing my experience; trying to maintain some happy or meaningful storyline about who I am and how I am. And the fact is that I might want to be open, I might feel that I'm open but actually I am quite closed. There are many things I don't want in my mind and some things I'd like to hang onto.

But when I stay in the practice I see directly everything is impermanent. Every mental event is passing. It lasts a very very short period of time, one second, two seconds. So if a thought arises which I take to be negative, it's gone by itself. If it's going by itself there is no need to push it out. If you were a bouncer in a bar and there was someone behaving a little badly and you go up to them and you say, *hey, you have to leave* and they say, *okay*. Then you shouldn't try to grab them. Because your job is to make everything peaceful, if they're going on their own, you let them go. But once you start hassling them, they're more likely to react to you.

So it's the same principle in the meditation, when you see the thought is going, it says, *don't worry I'm going, bye*. It's gone. You didn't need to get rid of it. No need to have some thought, *why do I have this thought? Where do they come from? Will I never be free of this?* It's just going. And of course it's the same fact for the positive thought. It's also going. *But I'd like to keep it. If only I had more meditation experiences like this? Why can't it be like this every time?* But it's going. It's going.

The impermanence of mental phenomena is the truth of them. We take the truth of what arises to be it's semantic content. The content that gives us some work for our cognition, something to think about. Or we might feel it's the affective content, the feeling tone that it has. That's what we're drawn towards with the thought if it's meaningful or induces a good feeling. But actually these are secondary qualities, and these qualities are attached to something which is going. It's always dynamic. So, if we return to the

dynamic quality of what is arising, secondary qualities don't matter so much. Because it's wonderful and going, it's terrible and going. The 'goingness' is the basis. The quality is attributed by me because I might have a thought I find awful and someone else might enjoy that. I might think that something is really good and someone else might not like it. These are our particular formations. So lack and excess are like a two-stroke engine driving our lives to correct and to modify. We do it in the meditation practice and we certainly do it outside in the life.

The Text by Maitripa: Introduction

So now we start to look a little bit at the text because Maitripa is exactly addressing how our mind is.

So, Maitripa is living, most of his time in north India. He had various teachers but the key thing is that he found freedom in himself. And he gives this short teaching from the state of freedom. And the text itself was then given to Marpa Chökyi Lodrö who came from Tibet and he then passed it onto Milarepa, from Milarepa to Gampopa and then it became part of the knowledge particularly transmitted in the Kargyudpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. So, year by year, more skin is forming around the text. Because it's brought into a lineage, it's passed on and it becomes a little bit considered as very high, considered a little bit secret.

So first of all before you study this, you should do various preparatory practices and so on. It becomes part of a package holiday, essentially a package deal. But this is not his style at all. So if you're interested in the history of organisations and institutions, it's very helpful to see how these teachings were taught under a tree in India become eventually taught by someone sitting on a throne in a monastery. For us it's very very important. I think, anyway for me, that hierarchy and patriarchy are always put into question because he is talking about how we are. And if somebody helps us to see how we are this is the greatest gift. So why should there be any obstacle between people finding out who they are? We're not going to give you a system for making money by betting on horses or how to select the winner of the European cup in football. It's not a kind of secret knowledge in that way. It's not knowing something about how the stock market's going to go or how to invest in peanut futures. This is you. You are

already here but we are blind to how we are so he's hopefully going to show us that. So It's very, very important that this kind of understanding is made available freely, but in a very correct and proper way so that it's useful rather than not useful.

It's very interesting that traditionally Buddhism in Tibet says that anybody can do, a few of these people can then study, and a few of these people can then understand. But everybody can do. So everybody can empty butter lamps, fill butter lamps, clean the little water bowls, brush the floor, and do all kind of activities. You can get your body to do something, because the body is somehow public. But the mind, that's very secret, that's very deep. That's amazing! That's really amazing that you keep the truth of people hidden from themselves and it becomes something esoteric. It's not esoteric at all. We got here this morning by being able to travel across Geneva. We saw cars. We didn't fall under the car. We saw the difference between my body and a motor car. We already have insight. We're not stupid. So, that's why we should access teachings like this.

Everything arises with the mind

Maitripa begins this text by saying,

Making salutation in the state of infinite satisfaction, I will tell you about the great openness (Phyag-rGya Chen-Po).

So, we've just been looking at excess and lack. These two pulsations indicate an absence of satisfaction. When we are satisfied, when we have enough, when we are at peace it's okay. You could have more but it's okay. Something could change, *ah, that's ok*. When you're relaxed and at ease in yourself, even if something is difficult you say, *ah! never mind*. Somebody pushes you in the street you say, *ah! never mind, it's ok*. Because you're loose and your energy is flexible, and pliable, you can go in any direction. When of course, you don't have deep relaxation you tense up, you become rigid and you very quickly go into reactivity. Because the more you become substantial, the more you become like a noun, a nominative, fixed, you feel the impact. But if you are flexible and moving and something hits you, you just go with it, there is no damage.

So the great satisfaction is being relaxed and spacious and peaceful. And he says, out of this state, he's going to introduce Mahamudra which I have here translated as the great openness. Mahamudra means how your mind is. And as we started to look yesterday how your mind is, is how the world is for you. Or rather THE world, because THE world is always YOUR world. Everything is mediated through the mind. Everything is experience. The fundamental understanding here is- the notion of self-existing objects is a delusion. Everything arises with the mind.

So, we're in a room. We look around, we see the shape of the room. It seems to be a fact out there. But it is disclosed to us through the particular sensitivity of our eyes, how we take hold of this, how we think about it. We get used to our sense of how things look. For example, I have reading glasses and I use them, primarily, just for reading. But sometimes if I have been reading something and I then go to wash my hands because of ink coming off the paper, I go and I'm in my bathroom, and I'm washing my hands and I have my reading glasses on. I look at my face in the mirror and it's quite shocking because what I see of my face with the glasses on, more wrinkles. *This is a really old guy!* Then I take the glasses off, *oh it's not so bad.* So it's like that. We imagine we see things how they are but it's according to the function of the sense organs. And as the sense organs change with time, and influenced by the heat, by the temperature. If it's very cold outside, people are not looking so precisely because they want to protect their gaze, we realise that even the functioning of our sense organs is linked to how the environment is arising. We are in the world, of the world, not outside observing.

So the great satisfaction is to be in harmony with everything. You could call Mahamudra the great harmony. It's the great openness because it's inclusive. When you have this sense of lack and excess you're concerned with exclusivity. That is to say, *I don't want everything because part of everything is shit. There's all kind of crappy horrible things I don't want them, why would I want them? So I'm open to everyone but actually I don't want to see John because he's a pain. So, may all sentient beings be happy but mainly just go away and leave me alone!* This is often the attitude. Living in the city I am overwhelmed, you walk down the street and say, *good luck to you, good luck to you, good luck to you, but don't talk to me.* People are quite avoidant. So we have openness but it's mediated. There's some kind

of control system, border control; what we want to let in and what we want to keep out. The great satisfaction is to be peaceful and on the basis of that open to everything.

Staying with the experience in the moment

There are many different levels to this first sentence. In fact the whole teaching of the Buddha can be in this sentence and we'll start to unpack. If you have enough, if you're not needy, everything is okay, it's the same kind of meaning as in Dzogpachenpo. There are many different schools but they all say the same, if you rest in how it is, if you are truly at home in this moment as this moment is, without wanting it to be other, without leaping into the future or hanging onto the past, this moment is always complete like a circle. And it's in that that we find the great satisfaction which allows us to be completely open. Because we start to trust, *it's ok*.

So if we get sick, it's ok. If you get heartbreak, it's ok. It is what it is. When you feel ill, very often the thought arises, *I don't want to be ill*. So what do you give importance to? This experience or the thought? Usually we give it to the thought that says, *I don't want to be ill*. So we take some medicine from the cupboard if it doesn't help we go to see the doctor and so on. Because I don't want to be ill, I understand this, this makes sense. I tell all my friends, *hey I don't feel too good*. They say, *I'm sorry to hear that, that's terrible you don't feel good, bad news*. What I'm not doing is, is being ill. If I'm able to be ill at all, I'm being ill with the added ingredient of complaining because I want you to know that I feel ill. I'm sharing with you something you don't need because you can't heal me. What I'm not doing is just being ill. What is it to be ill?

Maybe you feel sick or maybe your stomach feels really bad, you think you might vomit. It's really interesting. Sensation is arising. How is it? What is it? This is the big crossroads that we always have. How it is will be revealed if you stay with it without interpreting it or projecting onto it. What it is, will be formulated by your interpretation. But if you can stay with how it is, even if something quite serious is happening for you like you have to go for an operation, you lie in the bed, you see other people coming back from their operations you think, *whoa, ah, whoa!* Anxiety, fear, confusion. *I've heard about them and now I have them*. This is amazing. I'm afraid! So what is

fear? Then you sit or lie in your bed, relax into the out breath and you feel, *I'm really afraid. Now I know what fear is. I could Die. Now I know what that is.* So you start to have direct experience. If you give yourself to your experience to how it is. But if you interpret it, if you take this experience into your frame of reference and say, *it's horrible, I don't like it, it's not nice,* which means you've maintained the continuity of your own interpretive structure. So nothing new is arising for you. But when you really see: *oh, this body is so fragile. It could just die, I could vanish.* That is so helpful for meditators. Because the point of reference that we usually have is my idea about myself. But if I stay with the phenomenological precision moment by moment, you say, *my body is vanishing.* At any moment something can arise. You feel a lump. The doctor says, *it's a tumour.* They operate and then say, *there's nothing we can do and you have a month to live.* Many people will get that message even today in a hospital. We don't know.

Phenomenon are unreliable

So when you go for 'what'? The interpretation of 'what' seems to be something static which endures through time. But if you stay with the 'how' it's the showing, it's the revealing, the unveiling. *Oh!* Just this, and ungraspable, you can't do anything with it. And so it softens you. You're no longer driving your life as if you were driving a car. You're much more naked. *Ah! I am being revealed in the moment that everything is revealed. I am not an observer outside the field of experience, I am included within it moment by moment and it's unpredictable, it's unstable.* This is what he is indicating about openness. The more open we are the more we realise phenomena are unreliable.

But he's also saying, '*abiding in satisfaction*'. If you try to find satisfaction in phenomena you're often disappointed because everything changes. You find a lovely little restaurant, you go there, you have great time. After a month the chef is on holiday or sick or has left and the food's not very good. *What's happened? What's gone wrong?* Like that. Modern capitalism changes its productions all the time. You find a good pair of shoes, they really fit. You think, *oh I should get another pair.* But they no longer make them. Production is changing all the time.

Phenomena arise due to causes and conditions. Phenomena are not the sight of great satisfaction. So generally in Buddhism we take refuge in the Buddha, the teaching and the group of people close to the teaching. We don't take refuge in our possessions, in our families, in our friendships, in our work, in our health, in our sexuality. All of these are transient changing forms which can be mediated by sudden events arising. A sudden accident and something is altered. So he's encouraging us to find that which is reliable.

The danger with objectification

And then Maitripa says,

Everything that is at all possible is just one's own mind

So, what is possible means what can possibly be thought or imagined or heard about or read about. Whatever can arise is something possible. What you see in a movie, what you see in a museum. You go to a zoological garden you see different creatures, different kinds of plants. You say, *wow! never thought of that!* So that's something possible. Everything is just your own mind. Your mind is part of everything. All of these possibilities are revealed on the basis of your mind. So in this part of the sentence he's saying, be careful about objectifying and then he clarifies this by saying,

looking for truth in externals is the working of the confused intellect.

All of this text is concerned with life. Part of life is hearing, part of it's reflecting, part if it's meditating. One aspect of meditation is what we do when we're sitting. The second aspect of meditation is how we bring that experience into daily life. So he's saying, when you look for the truth in externals this is the work of the confused intellect. This is not a popular view in modern capitalism. Capitalism is concerned with commodities, with things which are out there which can be traded. We look towards science to develop hypotheses which can be proven so that we can have some reliable facts on the basis of which we can develop our life in the way we want to live. And we think we have arrived someplace. But of course when we look at the development of a lot of scientific production, for example, with fertilisers we find that they bring some alteration to the quality of the soil, so after a while the soil is becoming depleted. When we look at

insecticides, it protects the production of the crops but it starts to really decimate the insects. When you decimate the insects, the birds don't have so much to eat. So the population of the creatures which are around, the hawks which eat the small birds and so on, everything gets altered. So the scientific decision about developing insecticides made inside a frame of reference, which is that we never know when a war could occur, it's very important that each country produces enough food to feed it's own people because the pathways of supply could be interrupted. It's basic common sense. Therefore we need to increase production, we need insecticides. But the unseen consequence is only revealed ten, twenty, thirty, years later. By which time there is a whole structure of production, sales, distribution, utilisation, the machines that makes the insecticide and the tanks for spraying which you can't then use for anything else, so there's almost no resale value. The implications all go towards thinking, *well! maybe we just continue as long as we can.* So you get cover up.

This is the danger with objectifying knowledge. You think you've arrived at something very clear and it's decontextualised. As soon as you contextualise you realise that phenomena are linked together, because we are in an eco system, and because everything which shifts in one area is going to have consequences in another area as we know very well with run off from agricultural production into the rivers, it poisons the fish, makes the people down the river unable to drink the river water any more. There are all kinds of unseen consequences which arise. That is to say that the field of our experience is so rich and complex that our intellectual capacity cannot hold all the variables. Of course the answer to that for someone of a scientific disposition is, *don't worry we have computers, you feed all the data into the big computer and it can do all the things we're not able to do.* But of course the outcome will depend on what you feed into it and what you feed into it is dependent on your limited intellect.

So what I'm trying to emphasise here is that it's very tempting for us to believe in objective truth. That there are real things out there which are true in and of themselves. Summer time is a good time to eat ice cream. But if you have diabetes it's not so good because the body, the pancreas, is not really able to cope with the sugar. So you have desire and you have a prohibition because the doctor said, *this is getting a little serious, your feet, the blood supply is not so good. We might have to amputate some toes.* But

you walk down the street, other people are eating ice cream. *I am also a human being. I also have a mouth. I put ice cream in my mouth. This is very tempting.* Those of you who knew C.R. Lama, my main teacher, he was very fond of ice cream. And he also had diabetes, and the fact that he had diabetes didn't stop him eating ice cream which meant he spent a lot of years in a wheel chair. Very important to remember all of these facts. Not to idealise too much. Because the fact that somebody tells you that you shouldn't do this, doesn't stop you from doing it. On a cigarette packet you get a picture of a big cancerous tumour and it says, "if you smoke this you're likely to get that". *Oh Interesting! I'll have a cigarette. To calm my nerves because of the packet, in fact the packet of the cigarette is forcing me to smoke. This is outrageous!* When you look at yourself you realise, *I'm always playing games. I'm up to something. I'm a tricky bugger. I'm really not going in a straight line in my life. Because I want to. I know I shouldn't but I think I will.* Slip it through the back door.

Multiplicity of factors in an experience

We find it very difficult to be honest because we are multiple. We are divided in ourself. There's no first person singular. We have many impulses, many habit formations, many desires and they're moving like a moving field and we're having to negotiate this movement. One way to simplify that is to project it out onto the world and say, *this is good, this is bad*, as a simplification. Ice cream is neither good nor bad. It simply has quite a high calorific content and a lot of sugar, that's just if you like, a fact. It becomes relevant to you in terms of your weight, whether you need to lose weight, your teeth, whether you have very sensitive nerve endings in your teeth. There are many factors of your embodiment which means that ice cream becomes something for you. If in your childhood, the family was pretty difficult and you were often unhappy but every now and then your uncle came to visit and he always took you for ice cream, then the emotional connection of that meaning of ice cream may mean that you just have to have it because it brings some warmth into your cold heart.

So, what is it that is objectively out there? I mean we're talking on a very secondary level about qualities and the affect and memory which is evoked by the object. What he is meaning also is that you think you are having an opinion about something. So we can all recognise that. Say, *I prefer some*

*kinds of apples to other apples. It's just how I am, this is the kind of apple I like. This is what's good for me. So I have my opinion, I'm willing to own that. What's more difficult is to see that all apples are mental formations. But I go to a shop. It's not in my mind, I can't just imagine an apple and say, that that's the same as having it in my hand and eating it. Here is an apple. Now I am eating it. Subject/object. But what is this object? I feel its shape. I feel its weight. I see its colour. I can smell it. I start to bite through it. Different apples have different thickness of skin. Some apples are more dry, like Russets, some apples are extremely juicy and you get dribbles down your mouth. Each of these qualities is your experience. The weight of an apple on the scale may be 300 grams but when it's in your hand that's very different isn't it? Your hand is not saying 300 grams, it says, *oh, good sized apple*. There's something about our hand. If you get an apple that's just the right size, it fills your hand and it's not so big that you get mouth ache trying to bite it. Just right! Mmm. Crunch. Me and the apple, best friends.*

Co-emergent, the apple is revealed through your participation. Otherwise you simply have the idea of the apple. Without your moving towards the apple the apple is 'an apple', 'a thing'. And that 'thing' is an idea.

No, no it's a real thing. Look at it.

Ok, tell me about it.

Well it's a kind of an apple you use for cooking.

Oh, so is that in the apple or in you? In the apple trees before insecticides you usually have lots of little worms. Do worms divide into families according to whether they are willing or not willing to eat a 'cooking' apple? The worm likes to eat the apple. It finds an apple, it starts to eat the apple. It just eats apple. Cooking apple is a human concept. This is something we project onto it.

What I see is what I project

So this is what he's meaning here, again and again, observe your mind. This is your mind. We want to find out about our mind. I interpret the world. That is to say that I pull the phenomena of the world into my frame of reference and therefore this object is revealed to me according to me. The world according to me, not in itself. As we were looking last night with the flower. The flower in and of itself offers us no hooks for our thoughts. First we have to say, *it's a flower*. Then we might say, *it's a lovely flower*. When you have

'lovely flower' you want to look more. If it's a rotten flower, if it's already fading and maybe the water is old and it stinks, you think, *ugh, please! But no, it's a 'lovely flower',* so we look more. And we say, *oh yeah! look at the petals, they're so amazing, da, da, da.* We are telling the flower what it is.

This is what he's meaning here. If you observe your mind you see how active you are in creating your own world. You are putting the information on and on and on. You can hardly go to an art gallery now, when you buy your ticket, they want to sell you a little recording so you can walk around and look at the painting with someone telling you about the painting. This is the last thing you need. Information about a painting is the royal road to never seeing the painting. All you will do is fill your perceptual apparatus with this notion of the artist's provenance, where they lived, who they loved, if they had sponsors and so on. *Is this really helping me to enjoy the painting?* So, we are addicted to knowledge about which we then see as intrinsic in the object. And we're probably going to visit this idea quite a few times because it's so difficult for us to wake up to this that what I see is what I project.

Seeing as it is: Direct immediacy of an experience

And if I want to see the world as it is, I need to be able to not be infected by the potential of the mental factors arising which is why we did this *shiné* sitting practice because there we start to see that when I go into an idea I get carried away. I go into the world of the idea. I decided I'm going to focus on my nostrils but I didn't do it. I went into this other world. Where did I go? So when you look at a painting and you remember, *oh yes! that artist had a really difficult childhood, da, da, da.* You've gone somewhere. You're still here, your body's here, you're looking at the painting but somehow you're in distraction. It is as if the distraction is adding value to the painting. You're informing yourself about the painting but you're actually deforming the painting. You're altering the form of the painting. So, we're coming to this more, but information is not what we need. That's why we're translating here Mahamudra as the great openness.

The great openness means not informed. Without formed, without position, without bias, without tendency. It's not pre-formed, pre-occupied. It's just open. So, if you go to a gallery and you relax in the out breath, and you

open to the painting. There is a little chance the painting will be able to show herself to you and the more you look, not looking for something. You're not a detective but if you look in the manner of seeing and you just see, what you have is light coming in the window or from the bulbs going onto the painting and absorbed or reflected, and this mass of light is coming towards you. A painting is a patterning of light. The light comes in your eyes, when the light comes in your eyes, if you're very open, it goes straight into your heart.

There's nothing to say when you give yourself to the painting. Nothing to say, it's just oh! You are filled with the light of nothing. Afterwards there's nothing to say to your friend.

How was the exhibition?

Oh, amazing. You should go.

That's the best thing to say, you should go. If I tell you about it you get nothing. I give you just empty words. You have to be there and you have to be able to receive. So receptivity means being open to the object without knowing what the object is. But of course that means I'm naked, I am not covered by my accumulation of knowledge, memories, skills, experiences; I'm just open. Even if you know a lot about art, if you can drop that knowledge when you see the new painting then you really get something.

We should all be eternal virgins. It should always be the first time. Then it's fresh then it's naked, just *whoa!* Then you have optimal impact. But the accumulation of experience is like scar tissue. And it thickens and thickens, and we become desensitised. Because now I know so much about this painter I can't see as it was. Do you remember the first time you heard a song. And now when you hear it you have the song and your associations. How can I take the associations out? How can it be virginal? How can it be fresh and unmodified?

So when you see real objects existing in the world, the seeming permanence and solidity of them becomes the basis on which you can have your accumulation of experiences and memories and so on. So very often when I say to people that I'm from Scotland, they say, *oh yeah I've been to Scotland, it's so beautiful it's so...* all this. I want to say, *listen, my Scotland is not your Scotland. I went to school there. It was horrible. That's my Scotland. The moors and the mist and the romance...* No! *My Scotland.* There's no

such thing as Scotland. There's no such thing as Switzerland. There's no such thing as Geneva. There's no such thing as this room. There's no such thing as 'me'. I have some sense of 'me', you have some sense of 'me'. It's always mediated.

So when I look at you what I'm experiencing is 'us'. It's always 'us' together. 'Me' looking at you is actually 'us'. It's interesting. You may think that we start as an individual, I look at you and I think you're quite nice, or maybe I'll be bit friendly with you, get to know you and now this is my good friend. So now we become somehow linked together. But actually in the very first moment of perception there is an 'us'. Because you are always 'you for me'. 'You for you' is your business. I have no access to you for you. All I ever get is 'you for me'. Yeah? That's quite something. You can be with someone for ten years, twenty years and what you have is 'you for me'. How they are in themselves we won't know. And of course, how they are in themselves is changing and moving all time. Which when we look at ourselves we say, *that's how I am. How could I give you a true account of me? How could I describe me/ my life to you when moment by moment all kinds of things are happening.*

So I'm sitting and maybe I get a little pain in my knee, so If I was to tell you three important facts about me, in the moment it might be *oh I've got a pain in my knee*. So then you would have to say, *oh yeah! I saw James at five past eleven, he had a pain in his knee*. What do you do with that? But at that moment that was a defining characteristic of me. So a lot of what is my life is nothing to bring out into the world. It's conditioning. If you need to have a pee and your bladder starts to get full and you think, *do we have a break soon?* That's very much your experience. That's not theory but it's not really anything to share with other people. It's not a permanent feature of you but it is a vital feature of you in this moment. So here we have 'me' as experience, 'me' as phenomena, 'me' as the unveiling, the revealing of my lived life. And my concept of myself, my image of myself which is also different from the image that you develop of 'me'. So we see there is the fresh which is always there but it's often unsayable. It's like when you're a child and you say,

–Mum, I need to go to the toilet.

–Do you need to go now?

–I need to go to the toilet right now!

–*Can you wait?*

How will a child know. It doesn't know if it can wait because waiting is like some abstraction.

–*I'm not sure. I just know I've got this funny feeling. I might need to pee. Oh... I need to pee.*

–*Oh dear.*

So it's quite difficult to bring together the interpretive structure and the arising of the sensation. As we become adults we learn to manage and cook our presentation of ourselves according to these formulations. And the consequence of that is we get further away from the direct immediacy because people expect that we will manage the sensation in the body. That we will manage what is arising and that we will then become something which is okay for us. So that's something we can start to explore. Ok we shall take a break there.

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Saturday Session Two

Deluded part of intellect

Maitripa says,

Looking for truth in externals is the working of the confused intellect.

So the confused intellect is when the intellect is caught by a frame of reference which is not valid. In Buddhism that generally means reification, taking appearances to be substantial things; things which have their own inherent existence, their own internal essence. For example, when I was at school we would have to write essays on plays of Shakespeare. So there would be a question like why did Hamlet treat Ophelia so badly? So they are in love. Hamlet's a bit disturbed but he really pushes on her again and again until she kills herself. Why did he do that? But Hamlet has never existed. He is in a play written by William Shakespeare but when you read the play it is as if Hamlet exists as a real person. So you can start to think of the motives behind this imaginary character. We take it that he exists, we take the bits of information we can get from the play and the text. We imagine why he might be disturbed, he thinks that his mother went along with his stepfather killing his real father and so on and so forth. He's

confronted with his mothers sexuality which wasn't present when his actual father was there but now she's got a new husband there is a sense there's doing a lot of things. So on the basis of this you construct some theory as to why he was horrible to his girlfriend. This is the deluded intellect, it's the intellect, it's quite bright and intelligent and you produce a lot of thoughts and you get a good mark for the essay. The teacher says, *yes! you're really understanding what might be happening here.* And the key thing is, it MIGHT be happening, because nobody really knows. So what you get is a confusion there between your active imagination, a kind of empathic attunement, that you bring yourself close to your sense of the character. And you allow your imagination to play with what is revealed by feeling your way into this young man and his sense of who he could be in this court, this royal structure which he believes is polluted by activity. This is imagination.

When you go to the cinema you imagine that the film is real. If a novel is well written, then the characters seem to, as we say in English, ring true. We know what it's like to have a kind of cardboard character, it's just *ehh, this is really boring.* If it's in a film, and the actress is really present in it, then it's really like *wow!* You're taken in. This is so helpful for meditation because this is what happens in daily life. We are taken in by the way we give ourselves to it like a child playing, so the child has a little piece of moulded plastic in their hand and it looks a little bit like a car, so for them it's a car, so you have to go... *toot toot... going on a journey, watch out!* The child's imagining more and more things they're feeling their way into the world through imagining. But how is it that shows. We imagined into it how is it?

–Mum, you gave me a piece of cheap plastic to play with.

–No, it's a motorcar, look the wheels going round. Woo toot, toot

–Mum, it's a cheap bit of plastic made in China. Do you know when they bring it all the way from China there is so much pollution. Mum, you shouldn't buy that.

Children don't think like that. They say, *I've got a little car.* It's not a car. It's cheap plastic. It's not even cheap plastic because that's also an interpretation. It's colour and shape which is interpreted and it can be interpreted in lots of ways. You could say that you're inducing the child into the cult of the car and the car is polluting the atmosphere, it's very terrible.

You should give the child a plastic piece of spinach to play with. So in that way you see this is imagination.

That's what he's saying. There's nothing wrong with imagination if you know it's imagination. It becomes deluded intellect when you believe that what you imagine is an accurate perception. So what he's doing here at first is untangling some of the threads out of which you weave the patterning of your world. Each of these threads is valid but when you bring them together it seems to create something which is there in and of itself. *I'm just telling you how it is.* No, you're not, you're inventing it. You're sharing your capacity to imagine with me. And maybe our imaginations are close or maybe they are very different. But we are just sharing the arising and passing of patterns of thoughts, feeling, and sensation.

So the deluded part of the intellect is to believe that what you imagine is true. You take it for granted. So even if you go to a cartoon movie, and the creatures are quite fantastical, or a science fiction movie and there is some huge monster. You look at the monster and you get very afraid. Such a thing doesn't exist but on the basis of your interpretation you scare yourself. There is nothing there.

Interpretation attributes value to a phenomenon

So he goes on to describe this now in more detail:

All appearances are essentially empty as in a dream.

In a dream, you have all kinds of experiences and they give rise to emotions. Sometimes you might awaken from a dream and find you've been crying or you might wake from a dream laughing out loud. You could have a frightening dream, a '*cauchemar*', and then you get, kind of agitated and upset. It appears to be real and true but it's not. But while you're in it it's how it appears. So that's what he's saying, all the appearances, bicycles, teacups, coffee machine. Everything is just the imagination. So when he says, it's like a dream, if you see that a dream feels true but is not there then you say, *oh! the bicycle feels true for us.* We get it that's a bicycle. That's a concept. That's a concept in this culture. We think about bicycles in different ways. Ten, fifteen years ago cars were still on their dominant rise,

people were very much in favour of cars and so it was very easy for a car driver to say, *these bloody cyclists they keep weaving in the road, they slow all the traffic down. We should ban cyclists from the city. We don't need them, go and cycle in the woods.* Now it turns around and people want to be on bicycles and they say, *these cars, look at them they fill the whole road and there is no room for cyclists. I get exercise, I want fresh air while I'm exercising.* These are interpretations. The relative status of things arises and falls due to other factors. The value of the bicycle is not intrinsic to the bicycle. It's attributed. But when you believe in cycling you look at the bicycle and say, *if only more people were cycling, the air in the city would be so much better, we'd all get around much quicker, bicycles are good. They are, they just are, look, it's clear, look at the bicycles, it's good. It's out there.* Aha! No! It's IN here.

So this is really what he's saying that don't delude yourself. Really try to see that I attribute my meaning of the bicycle into the bicycle. This is from me, it's not there. Bicycles can't speak. Bicycles are neutral if we see them as positive or negative, this is the working of our mind. It's just an assembly of different bits and pieces. In wartime, bicycles could be used for carrying bombs, they could be used for all kinds of things. You could use the bicycle to charge a battery and you could use the battery for torturing people. There's all sorts of uses you can put for a bicycle. So, it's neutral. The interpretation adds the value. The value is not intrinsic in the object.

There was a thing in Tibet, maybe fifteen years ago where some Tibetans in East Tibet were starting to make money again and they were wearing very fancy 'chubas', this dress coat that they wear, and on the sleeves they were putting these mountain leopard skins which are quite expensive as a sign of status and power of what they have. And the Dalai Lama saw some photos of this and he said these are an endangered species. Anyway you shouldn't be killing animals. You should stop hunting and you should help people. So in East Tibet many people, rich people, they brought these garments together and they burnt them. Like Savonarola in Firenze, in Florence, that this is luxurious, it's not helpful to have these things. But before the Dalai Lama had spoken, this was considered very high status, very high value. As soon as the Dalai Lama speaks it's like in a game of poker, the Dalai Lama is a high card. You put the Dalai Lama on the table, ahh, everything else collapses. And you think, *oh, let's burn this.* It's relative truth. What seemed

to have value in itself, was arising in an exchange economy because the value is attributed. You change the interpretive factors and the value goes down or up.

So that's what he means like in a dream, there is no substantial basis to the value. It's the movement of the mind. So in both Mahamudra and Dzogchen teachings the focus is always to see how the mind is operating. You are never a mere observer. You're not in the audience of the theatre of life. We are all performers, and how we perform, how we participate is the drama of our existence. There is nowhere to hide from it. You are either available, thoughtful, insightful, compassionate or you have moved into a more selfish, controlling, restrictive position. But we are already in it, nobody is on the outside looking in. So when we read something like this the encouragement would be to take it and reflect on your own life. And when you go home, look at the items in your flat or your house and see what is the value in them? Maybe there is a photograph taken of someone who is now dead and you have a lot of feelings about if you show this photo to someone on the bus they say,

–Why are you showing me this?

–This is my mother.

–Oh good, well, we all have mothers.

*–No, but this is **my** mother.*

Yeah!

They will not feel what you feel. You think just look at her face, just look at her face.

–Yeah. And?

You see what you imagine.

The Revelation of our patterning

So if you do this again and again you start to wake up to your own mind. I am bringing the world alive with me. This is co-emergence. There is no fixed object, no neutral observing subject but the co-emergence, the co-arising; the interplay of the potential of what we take to be the object and what we take to be the subject are swirling around together. So our freedom is not to control the fixed object, our freedom is not to determine ourselves as an independent subject, our freedom is how we participate in the emerging co-emergence. How we give ourselves into that. We are not

in charge, we are not the master, but neither are we the victim or the slave. But we're moving. So in order to be on the point we have to be present moment by moment. So if you rely on your interpretation about events it's a kind of meta discourse and an abstraction which goes up in a helicopter, flying, looking at the past, looking at the future. But you're not here, if you're here it's always very precise. It's just this and then that's what we're working with, just this and not the idea of something.

So this is a practice, and the mind also is just the movement of memories and ideas. When you think of your mind and all that you learned, maybe you remember in school, you learned algebra and calculus, so many things and maybe now you don't know these things. Maybe at one time you were really good at chemistry, you had memorised many formulæ and so on, and now you don't know anything. *Oh! H₂O, I know that much, all the other things are gone.* So the sense of yourself, *oh yes I studied this,* but you couldn't pass the exam now. It's gone.

So what I take to be my mind, in a sense, as my identity, what I know, what I can do, is often out of date. Life has moved on, we no longer have that capacity. But because I can hold it as a constituent of myself it is as if that is still me. But it's not me. So the idea of myself and the idea of my mind is built up through time. The actuality, the immediacy of my mind, how it is today, is what how it shows itself. What you see is what you get. So what I find is now, I start to lose words. I'm in the middle of a sentence and I use a word and I think, *hey, that's the wrong word. Where did that come from?* Because I'm getting older, and so my capacity starts to slow down. If you see it in the traditional form, the 'Nadi' channels in the body become a bit sclerotic, a bit rigid and dried out. The 'prana' doesn't move so easily, this is just what goes on with ageing.

So certain capacities start to decline, the power of the sense organs goes down, the power of instant mobilisation into events goes down. I walk in the park, I see these kids and they're running, I remember myself doing that. But it's not me, where did that go? Now I can do things they can't do. In English, we say that youth is wasted on the young because if we were so healthy now, if we had that capacity life would be very different. But we are as we are. This is us. This is the actuality, the revelation of our patterning and so we move towards sickness, old-age and death. That's how it is. And

whatever we have created in life, whatever capacity we seem to have, it will get wiped away. It will vanish. This is like a dream. It arises out of nothing, shows itself, and then vanishes.

So if we fall into the dream, if we're in love with the patterning of these forms, death becomes very difficult because we are losing so much but actually the world shows itself. For example, my left ear, I've lost quite a bit of the hearing in it so when people are talking, I become very aware of the volume of how they speak and the clarity of their intonation. And before when my hearing was good, that didn't bother me because I could just hear it. And now I have much more sense of this person is talking to themselves and this person is talking to me because they're looking at me and seeing whether I can hear them. Then you get a sense of who is relational and who is not. So every stage of life, however we are, will reveal aspects of ourselves and other people. There is no right way or wrong way, it is as it is.

What is very helpful is to take some time, just sit, maybe, by yourself for fifteen minutes. Not tightly monitoring but just with a sense of how are you are. And then say, *oh! is there anything other than ideas or memories or plans? What else is going on inside me?* Even if you're in Geneva, you look out of the window and you might see the snow mountains, if you take the idea of the snow mountains, if you take the memory of walking on the hills away from the picture, you're just seeing shape and colour. Once you apply your interpretation you remember, *oh yes we used to go there, we used to ski on the back of that hill* and so on. This is the movement of your mind.

When your mind is not moving, what is there? What is there is not a 'what'. 'What' is born from concepts. 'As is' or 'how' is direct in perception. 'What', the nominative, the identification of something that is there, the thing, the ding, that's a concept. That seems mad, that seems a completely crazy thing to say, to say that 'the vase here with the flowers in it' is just a thought. Of course there is something hard there and if somebody picked it up and hit you with it, you would get hurt. It's a hard object and you could say, *I have a soft body. My soft body will be hurt if the hard object is thrown at it.* That's fear, anxiety and imagined feeling. The fact that my body gets bruised, what I call 'my body' that gets bruised by the hard object is not the proof of the true existence of the object.

Everything is relative

So I'm using my fear, my anxiety to say, *hey careful, watch it, that's hard*. You say to a kid, *watch out that's sharp, no, we don't play with the knives, put it back*. This is the mothers anxiety about the child cutting themselves. The knife is sharp or not sharp according to what you have to use it for. If the object that you're cutting is tough the sharp knife may not be that sharp after all. Everything is relative. But we tend to go from my positioning, in my life, in this situation to saying that I'm giving you the definite truth about this object. Then you apply that back onto yourself that is to say that you have a conclusion about yourself. When something is concluded you put in the full stop. You've come to the end point and say *the knife is sharp*. Yeah! it's sharp for Geneva. You take it to Tokyo and they laugh at it. It's not sharp there, they have a whole other notion of a sharp knife. So it's sharp according to context. So the contextualisation is not to say that the knife is not sharp but it is sharp in relation to other things. So the truth of the sharpness of the knife is relative. The meaning of this term 'the knife is sharp' is its capacity to be embedded in a frame of related interpretation. Does that make sense?

So that's really vital for us to see because as we go about our life we say, *this is good, this is bad, you should go to that shop they have really good coffee*. What am I saying? I'm caught by our cultural formation that there are truly existing objects. They have definable qualities and I can know them and share them with other people. This is deluded intellect. What I'm actually saying is, *I like the way they make coffee in that shop. That's what I like, you may not like it. You have a different palate from me, you have different experiences. So what would I say about the coffee*. How would we have a social life if we didn't comment. Comment on the coffee in the manner of a dream.

Don't get lost in habitual thoughts

Comment in a manner of a dream.. That is to say that don't take yourself so seriously. Imagine if we had a special guest arriving, Mr Donald Trump. Donald don't take your opinion so seriously. For him that's impossible because he has such a belief in what he says and he wants other people to believe it. And he surrounds himself by people who believe it that even when he changes his mind by 180 degrees, everyone says that it's true. So

Donald Trump is like an emanation of the Buddha, because he shows the absolute power of the deluded intellect. That things are real if you imagine them and believe in them. And like the ancient magicians, you pull other people into believing in your delusion. And everyone's deluded. We see this. We see it in China, we see it in Russia, we see it in many countries. Dictators always operate in this way. They say, *I speak the truth, do you believe me? If you don't believe me, we have dark rooms where we can cut your tongue out. Do you believe me?*

Of course we believe you. You are great!

Fear is everywhere. Who would like to be living in Iran? Very very scary. Journalists are being murdered all over the world. Being a journalist is now such a dangerous occupation, because speaking the truth to powerful people who want to believe that what they believe is the truth, is very scary.

So dharma is saying, the defence against openness, the defence against the unborn ungrounded ground is anxiety. The anxiety that says, *I need something to cling to. I'll cling to this. I believe it's true, do you believe it's true? Because if you don't believe it's true then you are undermining my truth. Because it's not relative. That's the meaning of dictatorship, whether it's fascist or communist, is that the great leader says? I speak the truth are you with me? Either you're with me or against me, and if you're against me you're dead.* You have this in Brazil now, you have this in many countries, it's very scary.

And this is the structure of the ego. When we study politics, we study dharma. Because dharma is the study of the ego and how the ego obscures open awareness. Dharma is not about attacking politicians, I wouldn't like to be in their job, but you can see how they embody the function of anxious control. We also do that but on a smaller level. If we were allowed to be powerful we might well be like them.

In many ways, we are lucky that our negative attitudes have very little power behind them. We just sulk in private thinking, *I hate my horrible boss.* But imagine if you could skin your boss alive. Or if you could take their eyeballs out and turn them round and say, *Now look at your own ugly face you horrible person!* Cruel imagining is also quite useful. Many people have done these things, Ivan, the Terrible and so on. The study of torture is very, very helpful for Buddhists because then you see when you turn the other

into an object, you feel that you can do what you like. There are persecuted minorities everywhere, whether it's racial minorities, ethnic minorities, religious minorities... Populism is like that.

We are also experiencing that, we sit in meditation and populist ideas take us away. We're carried away by our habitual thoughts. So Maitripa's saying, be careful, it's like a dream, don't grasp, don't get lost in these thoughts.

Mind is like the sky

Without inherent (self)-existence.

Maitripa is talking about your mind.

Without inherent (self)-existence it is like the energy of the wind and being empty in essence it is like the sky.

So when you think of your mind, we have some background notion, I have a mind, the mind is the basis of my thoughts. So when you look at the content of the thought, it's just like the wind. You see the wind outside, you can't catch the wind, it's moving, it's impactful. The trees are moving, the leaves are all fluttering. The wind is powerful but you can't catch it. He says, look at your mind, it's like that. Thoughts, memories, sensations, it's impactful shaping but you can't catch it.

And the mind itself is like the sky. Where do these thoughts come from? They arise in the sky, they flow through the sky. They are patterns, movements, pulsations. We call it 'prana' or 'chi'. It's like the energy or the motility arising in space. They are the breath of the sky, the breath of space. So when we sit in the practice and our thoughts and feelings arise, rather than taking them as a personal possession- my thoughts, my memories- just relax and open and experience, it's just the wind blowing.

So when we do the practice we relax in the out breath, it's as if you are on top of a great mountain looking out at the clear blue sky. There is nothing but space. And then you sit in the practice and all kinds of winds are blowing through and you just let it blow. Because wind might blow down a forest, wind could cause a sailing ship to topple over, but the wind doesn't harm the sky. It blows through the sky. The sky as empty space, is not in

opposition. Earth, water, fire and wind impact each other with some concrete shift in formation. When the wind is blowing strong, the waves on the pond start to go up and down. You see that. But when the wind blows through the sky, the sky is not a thing that you can say that the wind and the sky are two different things. The sky is just a space through which the wind moves. It's not either/or. It's not in opposition.

So this is why all these deeper teachings on meditation say that the mind is like the sky. Ordinarily, with our ego self, we think, *but I'm me. My mind must be in my body and I have a shape and a form. My mind must be inside me somewhere. It's my mind. It's a thing. Everything else in my body is made out of earth element, water element, fire and wind so I guess my mind is as well. When I look for my mind I see feelings, sensations and so on. And the wind, the fire, the water and the Earth are impactful.*

When you burn the bricks it carries the trace of the fire. When you pour the water on the earth in the garden, you keep pouring it and it turns into mud. Everything is mutually influenced. But the sky is not like that. Sky here meaning like an open space that has no self-substance at all. Everything passes through it. It's non-oppositional. So this is the image for the meditation. Relax into open spaciousness. And allow whatever arises to come and go. You're not in opposition. Although a huge storm comes in the sky maybe with thunder and lightning and it's quite terrifying and trees fall over because of the force of the lightning and so on. After two hours, the storm is gone, the sky is clear. There is no mark on the sky. There is a mark on the Earth, maybe some tiles came off the roof of the house, maybe a tree has fallen over and so on. Maybe there is flooding because the storm was bringing so much rain. But in the sky? There is not a single mark left. So this is the basis for meditation practice.

No inherent self-existence

When you really see my mind has content but the content is not the same as the mind, it's not other than the mind. It's like the reflection in the mirror. You never have a reflection without the mirror. The reflection is always in the mirror, you can't take the reflection out of the mirror. So you never have thoughts without a mind, the thoughts are as it were, in the mind and you

cannot take the thought out of the mind. Even if you write it down on a piece of paper it is existing inside your field of experience.

So relax, and allow the flow of thoughts and feelings and sensations to arise. So we do some practice like this now. Sit in a comfortable place letting your skeleton do its work, and without any agenda, without any intention, just relax in the out breath. Usually we do this practice with our gaze open into the space in front. We're not looking at the distant wall. We are just letting it be in the space, we're not blocking the senses in any way. What ever arises whether it seems to be outside or inside just allow it to come and go. The mind is like space.

(After meditation practice)

Ok. So generally it's better to do this kind of sitting for a short period of time, ten minutes, fifteen minutes because it's not something that you're doing. It's not an active, intentional activity done by the will. It's more like you're just opening yourself and being available. And of course we get lost, we get carried away in patterns of thoughts and feelings. Whenever that happens the instruction is just the same, just relax open and be present with how it is. The more you do the practice the more you can stay present with however it's happening. Because with this image the wind and the sky, the wind is passing through the sky, it's not harming the sky.

The reflections that come in the mirror are not marking or defining or harming the mirror. The very ugly reflection arising in the mirror is not a sign that there is an ugly mirror. This is the heart of the meditation. When you have thoughts arising inside you and you don't like them, what is that? Is that telling you the truth about who you really are? You say, *if I wasn't a bad person I wouldn't have these bad thoughts. If I wasn't mean or selfish or jealous or whatever it is, I wouldn't have thoughts like that. I have these thoughts because I am like that.* Now this is the interpretation of the ego. If you just stay with it, the thought arises and passes. Who or what does it define? Nothing. It defines causal forces which have given rise to it from the past. So this is a tendency which arises but the tendency is not defining the mirror in any way. My thoughts don't define me. My memories don't define me, my sensations don't define me, they don't define anything. They are showings, they are gestures.

We could say that Mahamudra is like gestures of emptiness, they are temporary pulsations or movements. What is established? Nothing. There is no inherent existence in phenomena. Due to causes and conditions this memory is arising in my mind at the moment. What does it define? It defines itself. I am this kind of thought and then it goes. Its passing through.

The mirror and its reflections: an analogy

When you drive in your car and you look in the wing mirror, you see reflection after reflection after reflection. These don't tell you about the mirror, they tell you about what's arising. So the content of the mirror is not the disclosure of the truth of the mirror.

So if you really take this into the meditation practice, none of the things which arise in my mind are mine. So when a reflection comes in a mirror it's IN the mirror. That's very, very intimate, it's right inside the mirror. The mirror is filled with the reflection. Does the reflection belong to the mirror? The mirror has no power over the reflection. Someone else tilts the mirror like that and the reflection is gone. It seemed to be a property of the mirror. But was a relational, situational, evanescent, empty formation. So if that metaphor speaks to you, if you apply it to your own mind, whenever I take this arising patterning of my mind as being the truth of me, I am deluded. That is the deluded intellect. It's misapprehending. It's taking what's arising in the wrong way. It's taking the content of the mind as the truth of the mind. By knowing the content of the mind I'm finding out about how the mind is. This is not true.

How the mind is, is open, empty, revealing. That's how it is, that's why it can show so many things. How is a mirror? It's open, empty, revealing. The painting is not a mirror, a painting is not open, it's already filled with the images, it's not empty, it's full of content, and it's not revealing anything except itself. The mirror doesn't reveal itself. You can just do that yourself, if you're at home just look in the mirror then look at a painting, or look at an image you have on the wall, the image shows itself. The mirror shows its not-self and itself simultaneously. It shows its brilliance, its clarity in its capacity to show that image but the image it shows is not itself. Does that make sense?

So then you apply that to yourself. Am I a painting or a mirror? Me as ego is like a painting. You say, *I'm like this, oh shit I wish I was a better person. When I look back, I have these regrets because I am like this. This is my shape, this is the contour, this is the true profile of me.* But the mirror is not like that. So the ego – that is to say that the quality of our mental energy which takes hold of phenomena and patterns them through excluding, through aversion and through desire – has a self-formation which we continue all the time like a gardener taking out the weeds, feeding the flowers, cultivating our mind. But the mirror is not doing any cultivation. The mirror says, *I show what's in front of me. I don't edit it, I don't change it, I just show it. I am neutral. I am even. I am without bias.* When you read in the Dharma texts the description of the mind that's what it says. 'Pure from the very beginning' means it has no content of its own. It's without bias. It just shows.

Then the energy of the mind, we'll come onto this in more detail later, but the, kind of, magical or miraculous pulsation of 'prana' or 'chi' or life energy, arises from awareness, inseparable from awareness, and the pattern shifts, and the pattern shifts. So the great masters of martial arts move without moving. Awareness never moves but the energy or the pulsation of awareness is always moving. And that gives rise to all the different patterns of our life. But when you concretise the pattern. When you pull it in as *this is who I am.* Then it's very hard because now you are stuck like that. As a therapist I've spent so much time with people who are completely imprisoned in their beliefs about themselves. They think, *I am unlovable, I am a failure, I will never have any joy in my life.* And when that type of conclusion is very strongly there, the tendency to move towards suicide, towards hopelessness is very strong.

Aaron Beck one of the founders of modern cognitive behavioural therapy one of the first useful things he did was he developed what he called a depression triangle. Which, the three points on a triangle, so it's three beliefs, one is that there is nothing good in me. Second is that there is nothing good in the world around me. And the third is that there is nothing good in the future. And when these three factors lock together this is high direction towards depression, hopelessness and eventually suicide. Because I'm crap, everything's crap, and the future's gone. And you sink

inside. And these are just beliefs. And none of these beliefs can be proven to be true because everything changes.

Ignorance: taking self to be real

So the big problem – what ignorance really means in Buddhism – is conclusion, coming to a definitive reading of yourself or another person. For example, someone's in a relationship and basically it's okay, they love each other and it's going quite well. Then they go through a hard patch a bit. One night one partner goes off, gets a bit drunk and sleeps with someone else. Next morning, they come back and you say, *You cheat! I don't want to be with you any more. You stay out all night and sleep with other people... It's over.* Everything that was built up over five years has collapsed on the basis of one wrong penis inside one wrong vagina. Now it's finished. This is not possible. You see the power of thought.

In some countries a person would be killed for that. Is a partner a possession? You're mine. What does that mean? *You're mine, I know you.* On a bad day that means that I own you and you have to do what I say. Many women are trapped in this situation. There you see the madness of the ego. My anxiety about my security in the world is projected into you and if you betray me you're dead. In many cultures the dignity of the family, the honour of the family is projected into girls, and so if the girl is raped she is seen as having betrayed the honour of the family. So the girl is killed by the father or the uncles or the brothers. I mean there you see how ego formation is mad. Now that's an extreme example but it's also how we are that we try to cut off things.

Because we're like the gardener, this is a weed, kill it! There is a flower, feed it! This is not like the sky. The sky says, *storms, rainbows, all okay.* So you sit in the practice and you experience- sweet or not sweet, beautiful or not beautiful, something I could be proud of and want to share, something I'm ashamed of and want to hide- just let it be as it is and when we do that it goes. It goes. It's vanished. But when you take hold of something, it's not truly what happens, in fact it's impossible but it is as if we take the event out of time.

So in the couple, if they manage to stay together, every time there is a difficulty, they say,
Don't forget I always know what you did, I will never forget.
It's gone sweetheart it's gone I didn't mean anything I want to be with you.
We've got a future come on.
But I remember you did that.
And it's so sour, it's so bitter, it's so restrictive, it's so definitive.
I'm never going to let go of that. You did that. You. So I know you.
This is the ego's discourse.

That's why the Buddha is always saying that you don't hang around in that territory. There is no inherent existence in this self because you if you take it as serious, as strongly real you will definitely have friends and enemies, and you will want to kill your enemies. You call them terrorists. You round them up, you burn them like we know in the western part of China, all these muslims rounded up in camps over a million. The children put into strange schools for indoctrination. *Because we know they are the enemy*, the government finds it impossible to think anything else. Maybe these muslims think that you, the Chinese government are the enemy. Aha! you both think the other one's an enemy. Oh! Maybe you're both right. You're acting in a hostile way to each other. The more you persecute them, the more they want to attack you. Fire feeds fire. All the basic buddhist texts say that there is no exit from anger, anger is just like a fire that consumes everything.

So this is what meditation is for, is to bring us to the point where we directly sit with these intense, compressed, definitions, ideas, and we stay with them long enough to see that they dissolve. That actually they are ephemeral, they are like a dream, like a spiders web, like a rainbow in the sky. There is no substance to them but if you just glance off them, they seem to be real, and real, and real. So we sit and we allow the dissolving of the constructs of the mind and then we find we're naked, fresh, alive, available.

So we'll come back and do some more practice after lunch.

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Saturday Session Three

Content of the mind: Self-referential formulation

The word ignorance, seems to imply a kind of state but actually it's an ongoing process of ignoring. What is it that we are ignoring? We are ignoring ourselves. What is the truth of our being? It's something quite open, that is to say that it cannot close because there is nothing to close. So openness and emptiness are two ways of describing the same thing. It is empty of internal personal essence or definition or existence. And yet we are alive, experiences are manifesting moment by moment. So the mind is open but the content of the mind takes itself to be closed.

So I can say that I am talking with you just now. And when I say, 'I', I can have the sense that this is referring to me, somewhere inside me. In my head, in my heart, in my toes, I don't know where but, anyway, this must be me. 'I' am talking. But of course, I experience talking is arising 'through me'. You could say 'from me' but where is the factory in me that's giving out the words? I don't know. Maybe some little camp, hidden in the forest, maybe some little witch is stirring her pot and out of that the words are coming out of my mouth. Until now I never found the factory. But the words come out. So talking is going on, this is undeniable. I feel it in my mouth, you hear it in your ear. I am talking. That's different, that's an interpretation. That's a second order phenomena.

So as our life is manifesting and we are aware of what is going on, there are these two levels as we had when we were looking at the flower- the immediate presence of the flower and our story about the flower. So talking arises and then 'I' am talking. I am talking to you. But the use of the 'you' then seems to establish you as some individual person. When the sound comes in your ears something is revealed. To who? To you. The revelation of what you hear and the interpretation that I am hearing what is being said, may not be exactly the same. So you have the formulation which is a self-referential formulation which is existing on top of the ever shifting surface. And most of the time we get so caught up in formulation, in construction, in making, that the immediacy of the disclosure is hidden from us. It's hidden from us by the production of the same factory.

Mind is unborn and undivided

It's not as if there is a good self and a bad self, or God and the devil, it's not a kind of Manichaeian split. Awareness shows what is arising. What can be revealed could be a relaxed openness or an anxious self-preoccupation. The mirror will show something beautiful and something ugly. What is arising is revealed, it's not even made. For something to be made it has to go from non-being to being. It is produced. You have a process. So there is the moment of conception, then the foetus develops and then the baby comes out through the birth canal and now there is a baby.

But in the text it says that the mind is unborn. Unborn means it hasn't emerged. It's not something which has a form, a colour, a shape and so on. And if the mind itself is unborn what arises in it is also unborn. In that sense, the space of the mirror is unborn. Because when you try to find the mirror itself, just as it is, in and of itself, you can't find anything. There is nothing to find. But what you do get is the reflection. Now the reflection can't come out of the mirror. So the mirror is like the womb of the great mother. And inside this womb there are many babies coming and going but not one of them is ever born, it doesn't separate off, there is no way to cut the umbilical cord.

So one way of thinking about ignorance in the Buddhist sense, is that it is the delusion of having cut the umbilical cord. So now I am separated as me in me. And you are all out there, you in you. And we are all these separate entities. Actually, we are manifesting as experience directly, here in this moment but our story of ourselves is, *no! I live in my skin bag, you live in your skin bag. You are you, I am me. I will agree that you can be you, if you agree that I can be me. That is to say, I am willing to be the cop in our game but you have to be the robber. Do you want to be the robber? Good! Now we have a game. So I am me and you are you.* The problem with this is that when I say that I am 'me', you don't agree. Because you also want to say, *I am 'me'.* We all feel like 'me'. But if I am 'me', you have to be 'you'. So you agree that you are 'you' but really, *you know James, I am the real 'me'. James you are 'you', James, really you are 'you'.* Everybody thinks I am the one, everyone else is just somebody else. But we're all using the same formation to say the king is here! So this is quite strong.

So that's the point where this umbilical cord is cut. You separate out, so instead of this sense of being here together, that I am only talking because you are listening. If I was talking, I could be outside in the street hovering around the dustbins waiting for somebody to put half a hamburger in there, and I would be talking to myself, *Jesus and Buddha are very good, they're very good. Jesus and the Buddha they're really good. I love Jesus/Buddha, you love Jesus/Buddha you give me drink, you give me something now.*

That's also possible. Some people end up doing that. Why do they get so desperate? Because they have no one to talk to. The more you talk to yourself, no one wants to talk to you. That's the real sadness of mental health problems. When we talk, if we connect, then we have the sense we are in it together. And this is a kind of approximation, a kind of closeness, to the original, undivided state, before the split occurred. So from the Buddhist point of view there has never really been a split. The idea of the cut and the separation and the isolation and the autonomous self, is a delusion. It's a fabrication, it's just an idea but when we live inside it, it's quite an isolated and sad place to be. Because even if you have quite a good family, if you have the kids, you see them, they start to look out their eyes and say,

I don't want to do that. Mum, I don't want to go there. Mum, I don't want to, I don't want to.

Yeah but it'll be okay.

But I don't want to.

And you know that your kids will be okay doing whatever it is but some idea is arising in them that says, *I define myself. And I have to tell you that I don't want to do this.* And so the child isolates themselves from the world by their own thought.

But mum you don't understand.

And the mum says, *no! you don't understand. Within half an hour if we go there you will be very happy.*

You say, *I don't want to go, I don't know anyone there.*

If we go you'll be playing with someone else within five minutes.

No! I don't like it, I don't want to. I'm not going to. No!!!

And the child becomes really anxious and it's terrible to see because they're wrapping themselves in a thought. And the thought is being enriched with feeling, so they end up lonely and anxious when actually it was okay.

So we can learn so much about dharma just by observing the process of little babies who are quite open to gradually becoming more isolated as the more thought production occurs. That is to say, as the child develops an identity, a 'me-ness' to me, the unique specificity of me as a someone, there is less and less that I can do because *I'm not like that. I don't do that. You have to know that about me. I don't eat potatoes cooked this way. Mum why do you cook them? I don't eat them. Because I am me. Maybe my brother will eat them, you will eat them, dad will eat them but I won't eat them because I'm me.* And lots of battles in houses are about this. They're about how do I create the particularity of my self? Which we can see is something quite terrible. So in that way the open or the whole or the inclusive has separation and isolation within it.

There is no separation

So for the point of view of meditation this is so important because if you had two factories. If you had a buddha factory making wonderful nice things and a demon factory making troubles and neuroses and bad things. Then you would have to try to close down the bad factory and give more money to develop the good factory. But actually it's one factory. There is the same ground for freedom and lack of freedom. This is quite a difficult idea. Because we want to say but surely the good is up here and the bad is down there. It's even, it's an equal possibility. The difference is when you're aware you see both. You see that both are empty. When you don't have awareness you only see what it's like not to have awareness. I am a subject, you are an object and these are strongly real.

With separation you get enclosure like building a wall around a field. And then of course, you have inside and outside once you do that. Inside, I can manage, outside is too much stuff. So we become a little bit wary about how we want to be with others. A little bit suspicious because other people don't understand us. They say the wrong things, they upset us a little bit. How are you going to be? But everything that I am made of is made of the same as everything else. On an outer level our bodies have the same kind of chemical ingredients as the other items in the world. There is nothing of this body that has come from some special place. Because when you're inside your mother's body, she is feeding into you the ingredients

necessary for the development of the foetus. It's coming out through her body and it's coming into her body through her DNA inheritance and through her food and drink and so on. This is part of that.

There's no scissor . The scissor is an illusion. The separation of my body from the world is an illusion. Because we all have bodies and they all have basically the same structure and the same ingredients. If they didn't, it would be much more trouble to go to the hospital. Every time the surgeon took the knife to cut into the body he's thinking *what's going to be in there? Could be broccoli!* You don't know. *Could be a big frog, something could leap out.* They're fairly confident there's bones, heart, lungs, liver and so on. We are the same. Then we think well what's inside? Memories, feelings, and so on. These show themselves with particular patterning. Sometimes we have happy thoughts, sometimes we have sad thoughts. The precise content of your happy thought will no doubt be different from mine but the basic quality will be same. When this happy thought arises I relax, I smile, I feel more connected. When the sad thought arises I feel a bit apart, I feel I go into myself and I'm not so available for contact.

Everything is already included

So we see that the quality of our thoughts and feelings and memories allows us to expand or contract. They are part of a pulsation in our connectivity. When we're relaxed and easy we belong and when we feel a bit hurt or maybe we feel ashamed and stupid, then we go further back into ourselves. It's expanding and contracting. This expansion and contraction is happening within the space of the mind. When you go into yourself you feel inside but everyone around you sees that you look sad. Because you are sad in the world. Even if you're an angry teenager and you go in your bedroom and you don't want to open the door, you are angry teenager in the house. You haven't gone to another planet.

I can't speak to anyone, I don't want to see anyone, I'm not part of this family, I never asked to be born. Grrr.

This is in my parents' house. I'm inside. There is nowhere to go that's outside because it's a flow of experience.

So this is the real meaning, everything is included. This again is another meaning of Mahamudra, everything is already included. And these

exclusions don't mark much difference and yet on the basis of these differences a lot of violence occurs. You get violence, historically a lot, between different Christian sects. Against the Muslims, the Christians say that we are together. But between each other they want to kill each other. In the first Crusade when the Christians got to Constantinople, the first thing they did was kill all the orthodox Christians. They cut the throat of the orthodox bishops because they weren't Catholics. If you're not Catholic, you're not a Christian. But this is an amazing thing to do. You come in here to fight the Muslims, *Oh! but we are just warming up, you know, kill a few orthodox, sharpen the swords.* Then you see *oh! this is the logic of it.* Because if I am only me by excluding you, the gap between me and you is part of my self-definition. *So don't get too close. I want to see where you are. So you end up like a castle in the middle ages.*

Every year in the spring time when the bushes are starting to grow they go and they cut down all the bushes because some archer, someone with a bow and arrow, could come and hide behind the bush to fire at the castle. So you should have nothing growing anywhere near the castle so you can see who is coming. This is like the paranoid ego, observing all the time and saying, *don't get too close. I have to check it out. Because if I connect with you and you become meaningful to me then 'how are you are' will affect 'how I am'.* So how can I be autonomous if your emotions change my emotions? *I want to be close but on my terms.* This is the root dynamic of Samsara. But the sad thing is that you and I are already on the inside.

The cut that we make between men and women, or the different cantons in Switzerland, or young people and old people or gay people and straight people. All these different definitions are marked inside the circle. Everyone's on the inside. But by drawing the line and squeezing and pushing on it we seem to feel a real separation. *You're not like me, I'm not like you. You're not like me (aggressively). I'm not like you (Passively).* And yet you can understand me. So we are not so unlike. So the shared and the different exist together.

All appearances are light

The ground, according to Buddhism, is the open space of emptiness. This is illuminated by awareness, by Rigpa which is shining like the sun in the sky.

The rays of the sun come out and they illuminate all the different possibilities. Without the rays of the sun everything would be dark, you would have no differentiation. What is it that is differentiated? It is the illuminated. The rays of the sun are illuminating and what we see is illuminated. What we see is light. So when I look at you and I see the colour of your shirt and I see your toes moving round and round; the light of the sun is coming in and bouncing off you to me. So you are to me in relation to the moon to the sun, because on a dark night when you look outside, we can see the moon. We see the moon because the sun has gone to sleep. The light of the sun is reflected off the moon and we think *oh, the moon has light. Isn't she beautiful, the full moon light. I love it.* You walk outside in the country it's very peaceful and there is this light, it's so soft, the shadows, the moon is beautiful. *No! The moon is a thief. The moon pretends. She is a trickster, don't trust her. She's taking the light from her brother. He's gone to sleep, she goes into his pocket, takes out the keys and driving around, hey I am the girl, come on!*

So this is the same, I am looking over there, I see you, you are shining with your light. It's not your light. You're shining with the light of the sun. We are all shining with the light of the sun. We are the manifestation displayed by the light of the sun, we are the illuminated. But we feel *no! I have a big torch inside me, and I switch my torch on and then I see with my light.* This is what he's talking about before when he uses this term 'the confused intellect'. That means *I know that two and two is four, I'm a smart guy. Don't mess with me, I know something. I know my torch.* Where is that light coming from? This is the light of awareness shining through the crystal of this individual formation. And the formation shows only the light of awareness.

So this is the basis for awakening to the fact of non-separation. From the very beginning everything we see is light. All appearances are light and they appear to the capacity of the mind to be illuminated. So the mind is both the illuminating force like the sun and it's the open spaciousness through which the rays of the light of the sun are shining. So we walk down the street, we see different kinds of people, we see different kinds of movements going on. When I had lunch there in the café, when we arrived, there was a young couple sitting. She was on one side of the table he was on the other. Together they were drinking the two slowest bottles of Coca-

Cola in the whole of Switzerland because they were still there at the end when we left. But he had moved around and he was snuggled up to to her, and she put her leg over his leg, and they're getting closer together, and they're enacting this whole elaborate movement. We see that people go close, they go apart. This is the light of the theatre of existence. Its connected and disconnected but always within. But we, because of our anxious ego self, think the disconnection is a true separation. This is the big difference. What is separation? Not attending to the openness within which we are.

Observe how we cut the world up

On a relative level separation is one of the informing causes of the climate change crisis that we face because people think *well it's my country and in my country we have a lot of coal and we need to burn all our coal and when all the coal is finished we will stop burning coal. We will willingly stop burning coal when we have no more coal to burn.* This is the philosophy of Poland at the moment. And you can see why should they stop burning what they have and other countries use what they have. Its self-referential, its my country. But when you look at the historical map the border of Poland has changed a lot over the years. It was very big, it was very small, it was re-written in the conference of Yalta, remember with Stalin and Churchill and Roosevelt. They re-drew the border of someone else's country. None of these three leaders was Polish. So it was very easy for them to carve up someone else's country, give that to Ukraine, Poland can be like that. After the war it's like that. The map is being drawn like that all the time. People are in the family then they're out of the family.

It used to be not uncommon if a teenage girl got pregnant the father would get really angry and kick her out of the home *how can you do this? You bring disgrace on our family. You're not part of us.* Inside and outside. And then drawing the lines. But the lines are on the inside.

Where is your daughter?

I don't have a daughter.

Of course you have a daughter you don't like your daughter but you can't say, I don't have a daughter. Maybe you don't want to have a daughter but you have a daughter. So your daughter has committed a crime by taking her clothes off, you have a committed a crime by lying, you just told me you

didn't have a daughter, you do have a daughter. Now you're a lying cheating man. Are you any better than your daughter who went to bed?

We can't think, this is our situation. All these divisions of terrorist, foreigner, refugee, local person, friend of the family. These are all interpretations. What do they create? They create diversity inside. But once you start cutting along the dotted line then you have real enemy, enemies to be killed. We know this. Europe is a disgraceful country. When Russia was bombing in Syria what do we do? We offer the people of Syria a million words through the United Nations but the bombing went on. Barrel, bombs arriving, houses blown up, blowing up the hospitals, and we offer words. We said, *it has nothing to do with us, it wouldn't be effective to intervene*. This is our situation. Always lying and cheating and the lying and cheating comes on the basis of the first cut which was *'I am separate, I am different'*.

Everything arises together. It's not just one world from the Buddhist point of view, that's a concept. What you can experience together is, as you are sitting here, your life is everything. If you say, *no it's just me*, then you would have to close your eyes. Now, in the mental hospital I have seen people like this. And they do that a long time. When you see someone like that you don't say, *oh they are being true to themselves*. You feel like crying, you feel so sad. You think, *come on sweetie! hey come up! let's go for a little walk outside*.

Mmah,ahh,ahh! (sound of protest)

Terrible! they are isolated.

We are not isolated, we are here, and what are we in this room? We are this! 'All this' that each of us is 'all of this'. That's the most amazing fact, everything here is us for each of us. It's not you and the room, the room is not an optional extra because it's always you **and**. And in fact it's not really **and** because **and** implies adding something on. It's you **with**, you **with** the trees, the roads, the people, the coffee. You **with**... So the basis of our existence is **with-ness**. Or, in Buddhist language, non-duality, arising together. So this is really what he is talking about here, and the practice is to observe how you cut the world up, observe how you judge, observe how are you rely on a concept that says, one of us, not one of us.

Observe how we identify with our thoughts

When you go to the market to buy vegetables and you say, *it's good, it's bad*, that means you attribute value. This is a mental process occurring within the field of experience. It's not coming from outside onto the experience, it's bubbling up inside. The thoughts are on the inside, they are part of the inside. So if you really see that, then you put your arms around your own negative judgement. You think these people are horrible, they're horrible. It's a thought. *Oh, how amazing! I am full of hateful thoughts. This is remarkable, I thought I was a nice person and I find I'm full of hateful thoughts, jealous thoughts, strange thoughts, weird thoughts. Wow, there is more to me than I realised. Eh? I am not who I think I am. Because I am always more than my identification of myself.*

So my identification of myself is the limitation on the manifesting of the possibility which is already there in connection. Because when you look at someone and you say, *these people are really horrible*. You do that on the basis of how you've looked at them and how you've had some experience with them. So you think that's horrible. But you're already connected with them. *You are a horrible part of the world that I am part of.* And when I say that you are horrible, the amazing thing is that you return the compliment to me. You say, *well James, you are also pretty horrible to me.* So horrible meets horrible inside an opening welcoming world. Negative moves, positive moves, expansive moves, contracting moves, it never stops. The problem is the conclusion when I think *no, this person really is horrible, really, they are always horrible.* It's not true, it's never true. Friends become enemies, enemies become friends. The Buddha said this in his own lifetime. So it was true 2500 years ago because everybody can see it. Countries in Europe go into friendly alliance, disparate alliance, and so on all the time. This is only thought and thought is inside. It's a movement inside.

So if we see this, when you feel that your thought is actually cutting into something and dividing it, this is where you can see *oh this is a delusion.* The thought is inside the mind. The reflection is inside the mirror. Nothing is divided. That's the main point he is making. So we'll just do a little more and then we'll do some meditation.

All appearances are empty of personal existence

Maitripa says,

Everything that is possible abides in evenness like the sky – thus do I express the great openness.

It abides in evenness means that I attribute different values to things but that is not the essence of the thing. In themselves all appearances are empty of personal existence. I say, *this is a bud, this is a flower, this flower is getting older, this flower is more fresh*. These are interpretations. They are even in being appearance. It's just appearance and emptiness. When you look in the mirror what you see is reflection. That is to say that there is an appearance inside this glass with some silvering on the back. There is nobody inside, there is nothing there except appearance. You say, *this is horrible*, what it really means is that it's a horrible appearance. Which really means that I think it's a horrible experience. Which really means that today, at this moment I think it's a horrible experience. So this is what is projected into it. In itself the reflection is the same. It's just a reflection.

So that's what Maitripa's saying here that everything which arises in its first showing, in its freshness, is even. It's even value. The attribution of value, the particularisation of phenomena is done by the movement of my mind. This is the really amazing thing to see. Therefore if I allow my mind to relax, and to rest, the particularisation goes down. So as with the quote that we had earlier which says, "when the mind moves the 10,000 things arise". So as my mind moves I have thoughts, memories, opinions and that particularises all these things but when I'm just calm and open it all comes together.

Of course shape and colour are there but the differentiation into saying that 'this is a block of wood', 'this is a photograph' or whatever, that comes afterwards. That's from 'me' to 'that', what 'that' is to 'me' is always even. This is so important because this means that the door to liberation is here in my own hand. Because it's my mind that is moving so if I look at the point of the movement of my mind then I am calm. If it was dependent on the objects out there, that there are real negative objects, then we have to kill all the terrorists before we can be happy. Then you are endlessly in agitation. You become a puppet of the world because as soon as your mind says that this is bad, you go into hostility about it. It's not there, it's here, I

am up to something, my agitation, my confusion, my projection. This is the ground of the confusion because I am contaminating the open purity of the world with these waves of my own concept and affect, this is why meditation would work. If it wasn't like this sitting and meditating wouldn't make any difference at all. It would just be like a holiday. But if you see the source of the confusion is present with me I can release this. I don't have to activate this disturbing array of thoughts.

And then Maitripa says,

One's own essence (that is to say emptiness) **cannot be demonstrated** (you can't show it) **and so the simple truth of the mind does not move from or modify the actuality of great openness.**

When you try to find your mind there's nothing there to grasp. If you catch a thought it's already leaving, a feeling, a sensation they're all already going. These are the contents of the mind and the mind itself, how will you catch that? So this uncatchable mind is not separate from the liberation of all the buddhas. It is already free. Liberation is already the state of affairs. The great openness has always been open, it has never been closed. But it appears to be closed because we are in the dream of restriction, limitation and separation. That's why in the Indian tradition, you have many stories of instant liberation. You couldn't have instant liberation if liberation was already 1000 km away. Liberation is always here it's just if you see *oh, there is no substance in anything.*

[Sitting practice: Relaxing into being here](#)

We do a little bit more sitting as before. Just sit in a relaxed way and sit however things come, whether it's sensation, as it's quite a hot afternoon, not much fresh air so we may get a bit heavy, a bit sleepy. Don't go against that don't try to push it away, don't merge into it, just stay present with it. Sleepiness is here, heaviness is here. You're with it in the way the reflection is with the mirror. Not two things, not one thing but non-dual.

(After a short meditation practice)

If you're not used to of this kind of practice, it's a little bit strange because we're not trying to do anything except to be where we already are. So

instead of proactively going from here to there, by relaxing into being here, we let go of the ropes that the passing thoughts throw to us. And they say, *hey catch this! Catch this!* And you say, *No! I'm Here. I'm not going anywhere.* The thoughts go by, the feelings go by, we don't go with them. So that's a very unusual thing to do especially because our habit is by involving myself with these thoughts and feelings, I get something. They have something, I have a lack, when my lack and their excess meet together this is beneficial. The thought is giving me some meaning to my life, some interest, some value, something to do. So, to not respond, just to allow it to come and go, feels at first like a great loss, feels a bit stupid. These are maybe quite interesting things that you could be thinking about that they bring some value and richness to your life instead of you're practicing being like a cow in the field. What's happening? *I don't know.* What's happening? *I'm not interested.* What's happening? *I'm doing dharma.* It's very strange. Why would nothing be better than something? Because you don't know what something is. Only when you have nothing, do you see what something is.

The richness of something as the display of emptiness is revealed through being grounded in nothing or emptiness or openness. But when you start from the position of I, me, myself, this person, then you enter into the openness with selectivity and you affirm the isolation and the true existence of phenomena. This is the big difference. Everything is even from the very beginning. It's not that we are rejecting what is arising. We're not wanting it to go away, we're not doing anything to it, we see that it goes by itself. Everything is radiance.

When we stand outside in the sunlight rays of the sun are coming, hundreds and thousands of rays are touching our face. It's not one big ray that comes and whacks us on the nose, there're Millions of rays. Light is like that, little pulsations. So the flow of the mind never stops. But what is it, where does it come from? How is it? This is what we want to know. So we do a little bit more of the text.

Interplay of energy

So, **one's own essence**, as he says, **cannot be demonstrated**. I cannot show you who I am. I can tell you about me, I can give you a narrative, a story about me but I cannot show you me. I can be, and you can see

something, and you can respond to that but this is how our 'prana' or our 'chi' moves together. So if we were in another setting and you did some pair work, standing face to face with someone, without doing anything you start to see how the 'chi' is vibrating in the space in between. You can feel drawn forward then back, you can almost seem to go unconscious. Without doing anything, you see that life is the flow of energy.

This is the energy of the ground. It manifests as sensation, as all the mental factors, but also as the perception of the other person because as you look at the person, if you just keep looking at them, their face dissolves. They no longer have any face or any features. It's just kind of strange. Afterwards you kind of come back to yourself and then you see the other person. But in the moment it's just light, there's just this space. And even if you find the other person attractive or interesting, there is nothing to do. It's not erotic. It's very connective, but it's not attachment connective. There is nobody there to get, there's nobody there to get rid of. It's just a play of energy together establishing nothing except the beauty of the interplay of energy. So you are participating in the unfolding, you are not building or constructing. And it only works if you are there, you have to give yourself fully to being there. So that's what he's meaning here, that we are not something that either we can know or other people can know.

And so the simple truth of the mind, that is to say that my mind, how it is, does not move from or modify or change the actuality of the great openness. We are the unborn openness and within that openness perceptions, smells, tastes, sounds, arise and pass ceaselessly.

Mind has no essence

If one can truly awaken to this then all phenomenal appearances are revealed as Mahamudra. This is the great all-pervading intrinsic mode.

So we have our various categories: inside, outside, self, other, the mind, the content of the mind and so on. But he is saying, if you are awakened to the actuality of the mind having no essence. That in fact it's not a thing, it is an infinite openness. Everything is within it. Then there is nothing to be done. All phenomena themselves are Mahamudra. That is to say that they are the appearance of the mind.

It doesn't mean like a western idealistic philosophy that everything is simply my mind which would be my mind as I understand it as a function of my ego. That somehow, I James, am imagining you so that you are just something that I conjure up like a magician. This mind is the root of me and you. When I say that my mind, my mind is no more mine than it is yours, because it's not a thing. When he says that the mind has no essence, you can't catch it.

So in my hand I've got my watch I can take hold of my watch, that's obvious, I am holding my watch. But that's because we are all deluded into believing that the thing in my hand is a watch. This is our conclusion because we are educated adults we are able to have this great power of stupidity. James is holding his watch, but 'this' is many other things than a watch like if you were a bit desperate and you were in a fight, then you put it in your hand and you hit someone, you smash the glass first and then you tear someone's face open. It's possible, it's possible to do all sorts things like this. It (the watch) has a little point on the end, if you put it in someone's eye, this could be dangerous weapon. You could wear it to a party. You could do all sorts of things with it. It's not a watch, it is conventionally watch because we limit the potential of the object by the rigid restriction of our mind.

So when we relax our mind out of its conclusions and predeterminations and we allow these possibilities to arise we can make a hundred things with this watch and more.. all sorts of things. This is a little seesaw, inside this Radha and Krishna are dancing. In the afternoon it's warm he is playing his flute, she is looking at him with big eyes so together we sing "Hare Krishna, hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, hare hare." Anything is possible because it's not a watch. The watchness of the watch is the limitation of my mind. When we start to see this, we see it's not in the object. It's in the mind. Then we start to see what our mind is. It's not a thing.

Everything is always open

This is just what he's saying, all these **"phenomenal appearances are revealed as Mahamudra"** because each thing is inseparable from it's own open ground. If the ground is unborn, the form is unborn and because this is unborn it doesn't have to be born as a watch. It can be born in whatever

way we want it to be born because it hasn't been born as a watch. It is unborn inside the womb of potential. When it comes out of your mind seemingly as a watch, all its other possibilities are aborted. And now we're left with one entity in time which will die. But when it remains inside the ever changing imagination, the play of the potential of the mind, it's never born. And for that reason, he says, it's Mahamudra, it means everything is always open.

Like the Buddha said that friends can become enemies and enemies can become friends. How is this possible? If they're really our enemies how can they become our friends? Because they were never our enemies. Why did we have a war? Why did we kill them? That's a very good question.

If you hang onto the idea that enemies become friends then when your friends become enemies, you say, *Oh! Maybe you're not really my enemy! Put your bombs away.* But we don't do that because we think, *You are really my friend and you messed up, and that's why now you're my enemy!* We flip from definitely this to definitely that. You are my friend, you are my enemy.

Due to causes and circumstances I feel friendly towards you. You don't become my friend because that would be a conclusion. Things change. But if I know that my feelings change and my feelings are unreliable, then when you're my friend I shouldn't be too friendly. Because then when you become my enemy I shouldn't kill you. But if you're *friend, friend, friend, (over-friendly)* and then enemy, then the killing starts.

In Syria, millions and millions of people are dead. Exactly because of this, for no good reason at all. It's exactly the movement of the mind when that is taken as being a true description of objects in the world. We say, *we know what you're like, we've got your name, we know where you live, we'll come for you.* There's nothing you can do. The state decides you are an enemy, it's very terrifying. All over the world there are people who are really in fear because they're being defined by the state police and so on. Terrifying. So what this text is saying is that this is madness. This is completely a theatre of cruelty, a theatre of delusion. Everything is pure from the very beginning. So your opinion has no power in it. Don't get carried away.

Conclusion is a delusion

So Maitripa says,

This is the great all-pervading intrinsic mode.

Means this is the mind of the Buddha. Intrinsic mode here is a translation for the dharmakaya. Intrinsic means it's inside from the very beginning. It's not added on. It's not anything artificial. It's not something produced by meditation practice or the accumulation of merit or anything like that. It just is. So when you see clearly, this is the mind of the Buddha. When your mind is obscured, it's the mind of sentient beings. Between these two, there is no big difference. The difference is that obscuration arises when you fall into what is arising and you believe that the transient thought is a messenger of truth. And the truth is giving you it's semantic content. Actually the thought is a messenger of truth but it's not the truth of its meaning, of its semantic content, it's the truth of its passing. The fact that phenomena are self-arising and self-liberating shows that they are the play of the mind. Just moving through. And if it's moving like that then how could it establish anything?

You know, according to the bible story, when the Israelites who were in captivity in Egypt, they're under a lot of pressure from the Pharaoh and eventually the Pharaoh says, *now you have to make the bricks but no straw*. And they look and say, *how can you make a brick without straw? It's not possible*. Straw is binding the clay together and you get a firm brick. And at that point they plan to have their exodus. So this is what we should have in meditation as well. You realise that you're not all normal people, maybe I'm a bit strange. You all seem to have proper lives, you seem to know what you're doing. When I look at myself I'm thinking that I don't know. So you've all got straw in your bricks. I've not got any straw in my brick. I'm trying to make myself. I'm trying to construct me but I keep dissolving because how I was in the morning I can't be now. How I was five minutes ago is gone. Everything that I think I am, vanishes through my fingers as if it was water falling from down a mountain.

How can you make a person out of water? How do you do that? Do you exist?

Oh! don't worry, it's easy. You just pretend. Don't speak about it. Just pretend, it's ok.

Oh thank God. Back to being me again.

But when you meditate you see this. It's all moving and I'm me. There's something funny going on here. That's what ignorance is. You see the contradiction. I'm building myself out of transient experience. And I think I'm real. But how can I become real if my ingredients are vanishing like that. If you have children you know their name but they're never the same. You look at them and think *hey! you used to be really small how come you got to be so cheeky. Come on what is this, you were so sweet, now what? fighting all the time. How did you get to be like this?* You find out they're becoming somebody else. My children becoming somebody else. If I could just have frozen them at a certain age. Put them in a freezer, take them out, warm them up for the evening then put them back in again. That would be very nice. But they turn into someone else and we turn into someone else.

Identity is a delusion. Conclusion is a delusion. You never arrive anywhere. What we have is co-participation. You can be in it with people. You can have the joy of co-emergence, and playfulness and connectivity. But you never get anyone because there's no one to get. You fall in love with someone but they're immediately changing because we all change. So if you say, *I love you*, it means I love you as you change. But really what we mean is that I love you as you change but don't change too much. There are certain parameters in this game which are very difficult because of course they do change.

So this is really what he's meaning. If you see that all appearance is the play of the dharmakaya then you can enjoy it as it arises without trying to pull it into your interpretive box.

Let's take a little break here. Let's get a bit more fresh air and when we come back we will start by doing some more practice.

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Saturday Session Four

The view: Traditional examples of Mirror/reflection and Ocean/wave

These first two paragraphs that we've been looking at are in the area of the view. So we always have the view, the meditation, the activity and the result. These are the four aspects of each kind of practice. In this text, he is focusing mainly on the view and the meditation. So the first two paragraphs are about the view and everything else really is about the nature of meditation.

When we hear this word 'view', it's not that he is saying that this is what you have to look at. He is saying that this is how to see and it's how to see without looking which is quite strange. Because if I say, *look at the ceiling*, you can all look up and see different things on the ceiling. There is something to look at. But when he is saying that if you don't enter into identification with the thoughts, you can see how it is. So the 'how it *is-ness*' will be revealed to you, you will be able to see it when you are not mediating it through thoughts. But that doesn't mean that you see it in the way you can see the watch in my hand. Here, you as a subject, see an object. But when you look for the mind, because the mind is not a thing, you don't see it as a thing. It's more like you get a feel for it.

So let's stick with the traditional example, the mirror. You really want to understand what is a mirror. So again and again you look on the mirror. You maybe go outside and put a mirror on the side of your house, and lots of cars and people are going by, so there is something moving through the mirror, but not too fast. So you see there are appearances coming and going. *The mirror must be there but I can't see it because of the reflections, if only there were no reflections I would be able to see the mirror*, that would be a very ordinary way of thinking. But if you keep looking, you say, *oh, I see! The reflection is the mirror. Where I have gone wrong is by having two entities in my mind. There is a mirror and there is a reflection. I've got too much of one and not enough of the other*. But the fact is that the mirror and the reflection are non-dual, they come together, they are at the same time.

Or another traditional example, in the ocean you have waves, when you go to the sea you see these waves coming up and going down. There is the ocean and the wave. But clearly, the wave is not different from the ocean.

Now if you say that the wave is the same as the ocean you've put both into a blender of some kind because you've lost the precision of 'now the wave is arising', and you can feel that oh, oh, rippling sometimes! So there is a wave and there is an ocean. But what we have is wave/ocean. Wave/ocean. And the wave and the ocean are not two and they're not one. So when you really see that, that's the meaning of non-duality. Of course the wave and the ocean are just water but water now is something quite abstract. You've left the wave and you've left the ocean and you've gone into water. And the water in my bottle is water, and the water in the clouds is water. But now it's so abstracted that it doesn't bring us anywhere, we've left our body to be with this water.

So we come back, here is the ocean, the vast ocean, you stand on the beach, you look out, it's huge, the waves whoosh, whoosh. Wave/ocean. According to the metaphor, of course, it's not exactly precise but according to the metaphor the ocean doesn't move. The wave moves. So the ocean is both still and moving simultaneously. You can't say the wave is not the ocean and yet the wave moves and the ocean seems to be still. So this is the non-duality. Almost the same but not quite. Almost different, but not quite. It kind of collapses our categorising in our mind which is the same with the mirror and the reflection.

So now we come to our experience. There is the mind which is the openness but it is not a thing. I'm open but I can't say anything about it, I can't do anything with it. It's me and not me simultaneously it's not a property I have. It's not even a state that I am in. So this, we are at the complete edge of language here. It's almost like I feel the openness but it doesn't feel the way happy or sad feels it's just, almost, like a sense of it. It's almost like a kind of intuition. If you were out walking at night in the mountains and you didn't get down and now it's really getting dark. You're walking in the dark, a little bit slowly and you have a kind of intuition. You think, *uhhh!* And you might even kneel on the ground. You had some sense, almost like when you come near the edge of the cliff. It's almost like the darkness starts to vibrate in front of you. If you've had that feeling, it's quite strange. So it's that kind of a feeling. You seem to know something but you don't know what you know.

So it's an availability. And inside that all these other experiences are arising. And so, in a sense, you see it without seeing it or you get it without getting it. You get enlightened the way you get a joke. In English, you get a joke when you say, *ah!* You get it! But you don't get anything when you get a joke. It's not getting a prize, you just laugh. When you get a joke you're freed from the joke because there is a kind of confusion or tension and then you get it, *Ha!* Something is released, *ha!* That's a kind of getting enlightened, it's a *Ha!* But now the hand is empty.

So this is what the first two paragraphs have been setting out, a kind of mood in which hopefully, we'll feel a bit more like, *okay, let's try this, I hear that I shouldn't try too hard, sounds maybe good, let's open to it, let's see what happens.* And that's the right attitude. We're not aiming to get, we are not trying to clarify. So that all these patterns of arousal and power and agency, we release them, now we're just going to sit.

Relax in uncontrived presence

I'll just read the first bit of the next paragraph and then will do some sitting. Maitripa said that this is the main meditation instruction.

Remain relaxed in uncontrived presence.

So, the key word here is relaxed. At ease. When you have to do something, if you're out walking in the country and you come to a small river and you see that you have to jump over it, you start to get ready to jump, don't you? You feel it bit in the muscles in your belly, you start to tense up a bit. Okay and then you jump. So it's not like that, we're not preparing for anything. We are unprepared. We are un-mobilising. Un-arousing. So it's not an active preparation. It's the passive preparation of relaxing, letting go. So we release ourselves and then we remain relaxed and open in uncontrived presence. Presence means being here-ness. When you're present you are here. We're not daydreaming, we're not thinking about here, we're just here. So uncontrived presence is, we haven't done anything to get into that. We find ourselves in that, as that, by not going anywhere else. So we're here intrinsically, without effort, because we haven't gone anywhere else. It's the going somewhere else that takes the effort. You put energy into daydreaming or being distracted or preparing or trying to remember what

you have to buy from the shops before they close. All kinds of things can catch our mind.

This is uncontrived when you stop contriving, when you stop being artificial, when you stop art, when you stop constructing and making, nothing to do. It's here. It's already here. I am inside the being here-ness. So this is very different from the view of many Dharma practices that say that we are wandering in Samsara, we are lost, we are confused, we have the five poisons, we've accumulated so much karma, we have to purify ourselves, and we have to gather merit and wisdom, there's a lot to do. Don't do any of this. Don't do anything.

The intrinsic mode is free of thoughts

So some of us remember from C.R.Lama this prayer:

HUNG MA CHOE TROE DRAL LA MA CHOE KYI KU
DE CHEN LONG CHO LA MA CLOE KYI JE
PAE DONG LAE TRUNG LA MA TRUL PAI KU
KU SUM DOR JE CHANG LA CHAG TSAL TOD

Hung. The guru without artifice or elaboration is the natural mode. The guru of great happiness, master of dharma, is the enjoyment mode. The lotus born guru is the apparitional mode. We salute and praise you, the Vajradhara having these three modes.

The dharmakaya, the mind of the Buddha is free of all positions, and is free of artifice. It's not made. It just is. So the meditation is to relax into just is-ness, just this.

So, then he says,

This is the intrinsic mode free of thought.

The intrinsic mode, or the dharmakaya, the mind of the Buddha, free of thought. Free of thought doesn't mean that there are no thoughts there. What it means is that it's not made of thoughts. It doesn't require thoughts. A lot of the things that we do in our daily life require quite a lot of thinking. We have to write reports or write letters to people, we make use of thoughts. And so your performance or your behaviour is resting on top of thoughts. But in the meditation we are not blocking thoughts. We're not trying to get rid of them, they come and they go. So in that sense it's free of thoughts. I'm standing on the pavement, free of traffic, next to the cars and

buses going by. The bus is half a metre away from me but I hope the driver is not drunk, because I believe the bus is on the road and I am on the pavement. I am free of buses and cars. So I don't have to interfere with them. They are where they are and I am where I am. It's like that.

Practice: Be with however the mind is

So then he says,

This meditation abides in itself without seeking anything else.

That is to say when you rest, and you're open, this is enough. So he began at the beginning by talking about total or what did he say? He said 'infinite satisfaction'. This is like, infinite satisfaction, have you had enough? Ç a y est? Enough. You're ok? Anything more? No. Nothing. It's fine. Satisfaction. So we don't need to add anything but if you are used to, maybe, doing mantras and so on, then at times when you're sitting, you can't really meditate and your mind is very disturbed, and you find yourself automatically reciting some mantra to protect yourself because you are changing your state. I don't like this I'll make it into something else. Tantra is the path of transformation if this doesn't work try this other way, that works better.

But here he is saying don't do anything like that. This doesn't need any adaptation at all. However it comes, it's ok. So, in dzogchen you would say this is self-perfection. However the mind is, is perfectly how the mind is. If your mind is dull and stupid that's perfectly how it is. You have achieved the perfection of dullness. If your mind is agitated, you have achieved the perfection of agitation. Stay relaxed and open to agitation. Ohh, ahh, phew, grr, what is wrong with this? What is this? That's a wrong question. Ask, **HOW** is this? *Oh, heavy sinking!*

In the meditation books, it describes these two things- gö pa (rGod pa) which means excitation and excitement, disturbance, and jing wa (Bying Ba) means sinking like a tired swimmer. Like us on a hot afternoon, it gets a bit heavy. This is the 'prana', this is the energy of the mind moving into these states. So instead of the water flowing easily with the first one which is with the excitation, you put the electric kettle on and the steam comes out. And then you turn off the kettle, you put it in the fridge and now it's freezing and you get heavy and dull and the water is thickening into ice. These are the

two extremes. The middle way is flowing like water. So we don't do anything. Whatever it is, steam is a variation of water, ice is a variation of water. Whether it's ice or steam, it's water. Whether it's flowing or still in a pond it's water. There are many forms of water. There are many forms of the energy of the mind showing itself. If you believe one form is right, this is prejudice. This is bias, this is judgement, this is discrimination. All forms are perfect as they are.

Oof, but it doesn't feel like that to me. What about me?

Okay, what about you? Would you like to tell us more about it?

Yeah, I prefer it when I'm happy. Oh! what am I doing tomorrow?

You were telling us about being happy.

Oh yes! I got distracted.

Does that happen a lot?

Yes Doctor, it happens all the time.

Oh ho, so you are an unreliable witness I don't think we can produce you in court because you change your mind all the time.

This is the problem when you decide on something on the basis of your thoughts, feelings and sensations that will change very quickly. So this is why always these texts say, 'relax out of identification with the flow of thoughts and what you can construct with them', then you find yourself at ease in open awareness which is the medium within which all of these forms are showing themselves.

It's not that the forms are bad, there is nothing wrong with thoughts, but if you over identify with the thought, you privilege the movement and you never find the stillness. It's not that stillness is better than movement but we are out of balance, we are so tilted towards movement, involvement and getting on with something. Then that's aargh! We just go that way. We have to be artificial to become non-artificial. So we are doing a momentary artificial, by releasing and relaxing, that's already a kind of doing, but we're doing it, aargh.. now, here I am, back in me. So it's just like that, shaking yourself out, now you find your spine again. Here I am. You haven't done anything you haven't made anything happen, you've returned to yourself. So, relax and release, *oh, here I am*. Now that's enough activity for a hot afternoon- I just sit, and I let the movement move, and I let the stillness be still. And because I know all about movement and I know nothing about

stillness, for the sake of practice I'm going to focus on the stillness. We have to remember this is practice, this is the meditation.

The ground itself is equal, moving or still it has no bias. But for us, in our practice we want to privilege stillness. Does that make sense? We are not saying stillness is better in and of itself but we need to spend more time with it because we don't know about it. That's all. And when we are more familiar with stillness the movement can come and go however it wants. We are not interfering with movement, we are just opening to stillness.

Ok, so we do this now, sit in a comfortable way, and how we enter the practice is very unelaborated. We are not having to do any mudras or prayers or mantras, and the reason for this is that where we are going to is already here. If we were going to go somewhere else we would have to mobilise, but the openness is already here. The openness is hidden by our movement. So we just stay here, (*clicks fingers*) here I am.

(After practice for a few minutes)

Ok. So when you have your own time you can first thing in the morning do even three minutes like this a bit longer if you can. But even three minutes just gives you a space and because the space is very open, in fact it is infinite, it's not a fixed thing with boundaries, you can see everything arises in it. So the whole day begins inside the practice. And everything that arises like waiting at the bus stop, getting to where you work or talking to colleagues, everything is inside. Everything is included. So then the habit of 'splitting and separating out' starts to get softer and softer.

And what we looked at just before about using this image of the Sun and the moon. Of course, we realise that other people are not just the moon but we are the moon, we are not the Sun that we are the effulgence of our mind. We are the richness or the display of the movement. So if we imagine that these flowers here were growing in a field at the top of this little table, this is the ground. So the ground is the basis for the arriving of the flowers. And we imagine that the vase that the flowers are in, this is like the field. Now in the field there are many kinds of wildflowers growing, different grasses and so on. You have the simplicity of the ground, when you dig into it, it's just the dirt, just brown stuff. But coming from it- this un-variegated,

un-differentiated ground gives rise to so many kinds of flowers and heathers, forms of life growing from it and within that and here is the flower.

So, this is us, when we do the practice we are relaxed and open. There is the ceaseless emergence but it's emergence out of nothing, showing, back into nothing. Emerging, showing, vanishing. Emerging, showing, vanishing.

You manifest in communication with the field

In Tibetan they say, *Rang Shar Rang Drol*, self-arising, self-liberating. Coming by itself, going by itself. This is the quality of the field, everything is arising all together- sensation in the body, feelings, memories and so on. You have the whole richness. We are meditating with our eyes open, we hear the traffic outside, we see people's bodies moving, and so on. It's all at once-ness. So with 'nothing', there is 'all at once-ness' and there is 'this', the particularity of yourself in this moment. So in that sense, you are the flower in the midst of all of this and like this. And next moment something else and something else and then something else.

So the richness of the field of which you are a part shows out as the particularity of yourself. Because how you manifest is always in communication with the field. So, let's say you're having a bad time, don't want to be in the house, with the people there, you think I'm just going for a walk. So you go out, I just want to be by myself. But my feet are on the pavement, I see the cars, I go into the park, there is the trees, the bushes, a dog is running. I'm just me with this. Now because this is not calling my name or making any demands on me, it's neutral. I can be at peace here. When I go back home and the kids are wanting something done, you say, *I've had enough, I've had enough*. You walk in the park, *aah! that's better*. You look at the tree, *ahh! have you any questions for me tree? Do you really want me to climb you? are you sure? Grass do I have to pee on you? No! oh! I'm so glad. No demand, it feels oh, that's ok*. Then you go into a situation and someone says mum or sweetie, come on, and you go into formation. You help them prepare the food or whatever it is. You take your place inside the field. Our formation is connective.

We are dialogic in our movement into shape. When you're just walking in the park you're not really anyone. You don't have to be defined or

formulated in any way. But if you go into the house and there is a small kid, they want you to be mum or dad or someone. When you go to work, there is maybe a receptionist or secretaries or colleagues, they want something before you go into a meeting before you speak with people and you are arising like the flower. When they want you to be a rose, you become a rose and when they want you to be a tulip, you become a tulip. Your potential as part of the field allows you to be clover, to be stinging nettles, all kinds of things.

Do you think that's true? You are so many plants, so many flowers, so many potentials. And it's not because you're crazy, it's not because you're *argh! I can do what I like*. You do it in connectivity. For example, you're going into a meeting, one of your colleagues always talks too much, so just before you go in the door in an instant you manifest as a stinging nettle and you say, *you know, John, silence is a blessing*. Whack! Nice! Kill them before they're in the meeting. Then other people don't see the blood. Do your killing in the passageway, it's very important. And it's helpful because John gets lost and he talks and he talks and the meeting is spoiled. If you challenge him he gets shamed and angry and anxious, then other people go to rescue John because everybody rescues John, then you know these kinds of stories, they're not uncommon. So we have to manage it, so there is a right time to be like a nettle, or the thorn of a rose and there is a time to be the flower of the rose. That's skilful means, it's actually compassionate to try to stop people causing disturbance for other people. It's the movement of energy, it doesn't mean I hate John. It means John has a habit I should stop. So that's the movement of the energy as it arises. I'm not any of the things that I show, I am showing many of the things that I can show but who am I? Open and empty. I'm nothing, I'm everything, I'm this thing. In this moment I'm this thing, but it's not who I am. It's how I show.

Practice: Stay with what is arising without rejecting or merging

So the freedom to show is embedded in being in the ground because if you are still stuck in your false ground which is your family's expectations of you, your family's imagining of who you are, your friends' belief that they know who you are, then you have a false self-construction and everybody is expecting you to be who they think you are. And then you don't want to let them down or if you do try to change then, they say, *are you okay? Is*

something the matter? It's not you, we know you, come on you're not really like that. So there is a pressure to come back to being the form that they recognise. So then you are planted in the ground of their expectations. So the function of the meditation is when we feel these expectations, and demands and habit formations arising in our minds, then we don't merge into them. We are starting to loosen ourselves from our pre-formation which means when the people who think they know us try to hook us with their expectation, this has opened. Before, oh come on James, you know you love doing this, but now, really? They can't hook. So that's the great freedom that comes from meditation. This is my ground, not your expectations, but the open ground. It doesn't mean I'm abandoning people but I'm not going to do a pas de deux with their expectations. Because there's not much difference between a pas de deux and a folie à deux. You get lost in that. You think you're doing the dance but the dance is dancing you. You're in the neurotic formation. So, when we do the practice, we are not à deux, we are non-dual. This is arising and we are still. We are not rejecting the arising, we are not merging in the arising. We are letting it come and go. Let's do another short sitting.

(After the practice)

So, in the practice there are no mistakes, there is only how it is. If you have an intention, say you're in a hurry to get someplace, and you take the wrong turning on the road, then it's a mistake. You're going to be a bit late now because you're going the wrong way. We are not going anywhere in this practice. We are just being here. So there is never any mistake. If you get a bit sleepy this is what is occurring. Your awareness is a bit like clouds thickening in the sky, there is a kind of a density, opacity, that comes into the mind there is a lack of clarity and you become a bit heavy. Try to stay present with it as much as possible. Just stay with that.

What's arising is sensation, maybe a little bit of memory, and then it might shift by itself into a kind of irritation, some kind of arousal, something else will happen. The more you don't move the more you see that movement is ceaseless. Some people have the feeling that if I become too passive nothing will happen. This is not true. There is a saying in English that 'nature abhors a vacuum'. And you can see that in the city if there is some building

site or something, within a month weeds or wildflowers start to grow there. Happening is always there.

So if you relax your conscious or your habitual filling of yourself with content, content of a different kind will arise. Then you realise, oh it's always been, all content has been the sun, but I have taken it to be I, me, myself, the moon. I have misinterpreted me thinking. So it's like that in the title of Epstein's book 'Thoughts without a thinker'. Thoughts are arising but I am not the thinker. *'I'm the thinker'* is just another thought. Who thought that thought? Well, I did, but who is the 'I' that's thinking it? That's another thought. Thought chases thought and patterns arise but who is the thinker of the thought? They emerge. The thought emerges and you claim it but your claiming is after it's emergence. The ego is always out of time. It's always after the event, or before the event. The ego rushes ahead, planning, hoping, daydreaming, and runs behind thinking, *oh I have to look into that more, that's really interesting, maybe I have to write that one down. That's important.* It's trying to catch something but then the next thought is coming, and the next thought, and then next thought... So always we just stay with it, however it is.

Less is more

Less is more. Less is more because more is always available but when I choose the narrow menu, I get less. That is to say, when I say these assumptions are my ground, this is the basis of me, I have cut myself off from the great ground, the infinite source. And I've restricted myself to my own terrain. Only I am doing that, nobody is doing it to me. Of course culture encourages us to take that interpretation.

It's always very interesting when people change their career. In the last couple of years I know quite a lot of people, who have really just completely changed their life. Someone I know, he was a psychiatrist and he's decided that he really wants to be a gardener. He said, *I'm tired of people, just digging up the earth is very nice. Talking to people all day long is a headache.* Now he's a gardener, he earns maybe a quarter or a fifth of the money but he's quite contented. The interesting thing here is that he was able to feel that that was a period of my life, that was a chapter of my life. And that is such a helpful way of looking rather than thinking this is who I

am, I spent eleven years getting my qualifications, I really should take it till I retire, this is important work, I'm helping people. This is like a prison of thought, a prison of expectation. Rather, he thought, *I've done it for a while now I'll do something else*. So you claim the freedom to open to more of your ground, not to imprison yourself.

So we are doing the inner bit of that in the meditation when we just allow the thought to go without hooking us. It's like two pieces of Velcro, I don't know what you call that in French, so you need two pieces to hook. The more smooth you become, like polished granite, like polished stone, the Velcro doesn't do anything. So your habitual thoughts seem to have the power to catch you. You feel pulled into it but now you're smooth. The more smooth you become, the less hooked you are. And then you realise the power was never in the object. The power was always my power, I gave my power away. If alcohol was totally addictive everyone who ever has a glass of wine would be drinking the whole bottle, but it's not true. Some people drink a glass, it's enough. And they don't have another glass till next week. Other people have a glass every day, some people have a bottle every day. That's how they situate themselves in relation to the object. But if the wine had the power to make someone drink a whole bottle then everyone who tasted the wine would drink the whole bottle. So the power is not in the object.

It's the same with the thought: some people have a thought arising in their mind such as, *I want to steal from this person*. Some people have a thought such as, *I want to murder this person*, and they do it. It just arises. So what it means is they are able to tolerate the persecutory fantasy arising in their mind. They are able to experience hatred, cruelty, maliciousness, without acting it out. And this is a very beautiful thing, and psychotherapy can certainly help with this, it allows people to access more of their repertoire, their potentiality of moves. And the more you know you can be angry, and mean and selfish and cruel, the paradox is, the less likely you are to act it out. Because people often murder in a blind rage. Because when they get angry the light goes off, they don't even know they're angry, they're just in it. Whereas the more you can be with your anger you can soften it through all kinds of gradations, you can dance your anger, and you can sing your anger, you can run up and down a hill in your fury. You can jump in the water and splash your arms, you can be angry, *oh! This is being angry*. I

want to kill, I going to kill this wave. Aargh! Victory! And then it's gone. And that's so important, you can do that in a softer way inside the meditation.

In the tantric system you can be visualising yourself as a wrathful deity and so on. You can be Dorje Drolö or any other wrathful deity, it is a way of being angry without being angry. This is the full arising of sensation in the body, and it's empty. It's just theatre, everything in life is theatre. And what makes it safe is you know that it's theatre. Our fear about President Trump is that he doesn't know it's theatre. President Putin doesn't know it's theatre. They think it's real. Whereas if you see it's all theatre, it's this, and then it's gone. You en-role, you get into the role, and then you de-role, you come out of the role. Just like the wave in the ocean coming up, going down. So you go into your work, you go into your office, you sit at your desk, you are the important person. And then you leave the office and you're waiting for the bus and you're just another person standing in the rain. Important / nobody. We are so lucky to have this kind of life. We are not special people, we are invisible people. So we have full range to everything- being sweet, being sour, and then you say I am just like the sea weeds slithering with the waves, moving and swirling and turning.

Let's have a 10 minute break, stretch, get some fresh air, come back and do some more sitting.

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Saturday Session Five

The hierarchy of Dharma activities/ practices

Now in the Tibetan tradition, there are many many kinds of meditation and many kinds of dharma activities which are seen as virtuous like building temples, stupas, feeding monks and nuns, putting up prayer flags. And in terms of Dharma practice, they are reciting mantras, turning prayer wheels and so on as outer forms of activity. Doing prayers for the benefit of all beings, doing meditation to calm the mind, the kind of practice we began with, studying the Dharma texts, the heart sutra, the Abhidharma text and so on. There are many many kinds of things to do and many Tantric

practices to do as well like preliminary practices, advanced practices and so on. Most of these practices are organised in a hierarchy. This is more outer, this is more inner. This is secret, this is the most secret. They often have that kind of categorisation. So the reason I'm saying this is because Maitripa now says,

The kind of meditation that goes searching is merely the working of the confused intellect.

So, what are we searching for? Generally speaking in dharma we are searching to make the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. So you might go to Bodhgaya in India and burn some lamps, you might go to Mount Kailash, you might feed the starving people or you might fund an orphanage, you might help to print books, you might train as a translator and there are all kinds of activities you can engage in, and these are virtuous. There are also things which take time. The time they take is the time you have before you die. Are they essential? You're going to die. If you do practice according to the general Mahayana, it will take you millions and millions of lifetimes to get enlightened. If you practice according to the lowest tantra, it will take you tens of millions of lifetimes. If you start to practice according to the highest tantra, it takes you maybe 21 lifetimes, and so on. And if you practice according to Mahamudra, one lifetime is enough.

So they say, why is this? Because, in the city, you have tour buses. You go to the stop, you get on the tour bus and the bus takes you all around Geneva, and after a long journey it brings you back to where you were. Where you were was in Geneva. So you started in Geneva, you went around Geneva, and you ended up back in Geneva. This is an amazing achievement! Well done! (Clap clap). So a lot of dharma is like that, here I am, now you do all these preliminary practices. Going here, going there, big long journey, and where do you come to at the end? Mahamudra. Mahamudra says, 'be where you are'. Why didn't somebody say that at the beginning? That's a very good question. But we are lucky, we get it at the beginning. Be where you are. You don't need to go on a big journey.

Now of course, inside a, patriarchal, hierarchical system you can't be the king unless you've got people to tell what to do. And it would be really boring. Have you ever met a king who made his own cup of tea? I don't

think my own teacher ever made a cup of tea for himself in his whole life. He would be sitting here and he'd say, *one glass water* (snapping his fingers). He'd never say, *bring me water*, he'd say, *one glass water*. Of course someone bring some water. No wonder you're in a wheelchair, you never use your legs. That's not a holy thought. But it's true. He was prevented from making a cup of tea. I would hate to have people make a cup of tea for me. In my life I have had many cups of tea made by many people and out of these let's say two hundred cups, three were good. Because I know how to make my own tea. There is a particular way, you look at the colour, the water must be completely boiling, you first of all pour boiling water into the cup because the cup should be hot. Pour that out, teabag, boiling water, you leave it, then you stir it a few times, then the colour is changing, when the colour is right you take it out and you put in the milk. Like that. Years of practice. I have been doing it for forty years.

So in that way you see there are many things we can do in our life. What is important? What is not important? But the king needs to have servants. And the servants need to have something to do, so people make things for the servants to do. We need another monastery. Really? In Kathmandu Valley around Bodhnath there's now more than sixty five monasteries. Why? The monasteries are made of cement. The production of cement pollutes the river. The fish die. There's no fish in the river. But we have a monastery. And who's in the monastery? No one. Because monks eat and if you don't have money you can't put the food in the mouth of the monks. So there are no monks. Monks go where lunch is. It's not advanced logic to understand this but building monasteries is virtuous. This is an abstractive thought. The thought is taken out of the context which resulted in taking Tibet and their form of Buddhism and putting it into the Nepal Valley which is a small compacted place and where there is already some degree of tension between different cultural groups. All these Tibetans coming in and pushing in? Is this virtuous or is it ecological damage? So this is something to think about.

If you have beautiful feng shui, if you have the most beautiful aesthetic sense of a valley, and you take that to Ladakh and you see where people built these little stupas. And you look down the valley, just on the ridge in the most perfect place you can imagine, there's a little white stupa. So beautiful! You go to Nepal and you go to a place like Namobuddha way off

the road there is a big cement monastery built by a holy Kargyupa lama. It is ugly and it doesn't fit in. It's not beautiful. What happened to the Tibetans that they lost their aesthetic sensibility? It's out of all proportion, it's a quiet valley. There is something about that sensibility where you start with the idea of something that's good and you impose it because 'this is good' and therefore if we do it 'it will be good'. This is barbarian logic. You have to feel the place, does it need this? Why do we want to be here? This has been like this. There is a stupa in Namobuddha, it's been there for a thousand years at least. Why do we want to build something else? It's beautiful. We could put up some tents and then we go away and each person who came could experience the simplicity of this place. The perfect attunement. But they say, *no! Let's put cement into the place.* I'm not meaning this as a big critique but we just have to think, why do people do things? If you start with the idea that it's good, rather than the immediate relationship to the environment, you do all sorts of crazy things.

So this is what he is meaning, the meditation which is seeking something, when you feel you have to do something, when you have to make something like I have to finish my ngondro, then I have to do my yidam, then I have to do this, then I have to do that. Ask why? *Oh, because I have to. Everyone does it.* It's like a 16-year-old going to a party thinking, *I have to lose my virginity because all the other girls have.* Hang on a minute, maybe not. Do you want to? Is it someone you're in love with? *No.. but they're all talking about sex in school all the time and I feel left out.* This kind of peer pressure is real. *What shall I do? How will I be?* You can clam it down and see if it's required.

If you are a doctor it is forbidden to give medicine to patients without doing diagnosis. What are the signs? What are the symptoms? Check, do the blood test, come up with a diagnosis. Then you look through the pharmacopoeia, then do you look at how their body is, their age and so on. Then you prescribe the medicine. They don't come into the room and you say are you Buddhist? Oh, 100,000 prostrations. What kind of a diagnosis is this? Just write a prescription- ngondro. This is crazy, what are you suffering from? What is your problem? Maybe some people should do 100 million offerings because they are very mean and greedy, but they don't need to do any purification because getting generosity will purify everything for them.

You don't need 'something other' than 'this'

So this is really what Maitripa is saying that you start with your own mind. If you don't know your own mind and you just wander around saying, '*what should I do? What should I do?*' You can be sure people will tell you. But if you look at your own mind and then you see this is my tendency, I have a problem with anger or jealousy or I always fall asleep when I'm meditating. Then you have a very precise question, *what should I do?* And it's meaningful and it's real and then you're likely to do it. But so many people start off doing long practices and they never finish them. Because they never understood why they did them. Just because it's a good thing to do.

So this is what he means by meditations which are looking or trying to get somewhere else, going searching for something is merely the working of the confused intellect. Why? Because there is something to get. I lack something. Maitripa says, no, you don't. You have an excess of the thought that you lack something. That is excess, it's not lack. You don't lack anything. You've got exactly it. You're here. That's all you need but you think you need something other than this. This is what you need but you imagine you need something other than this. This is very dangerous. Because if I don't need this, and this is what there is, then I need something else.

Now, if you go to a small restaurant, and they have the plat de jour, probably a good idea to eat it. Because the guy is cooking it freshly and it's probably reasonable ingredients. But you look on the menu at the back page and there is something quite esoteric with three kinds of foie gras. Probably not a good idea, when did anybody last eat that? At the back of the freezer some little dried up dog turd. That'll do. Yes? That's how it is. What is here, what is the plat de jour? Me! I'm here. I should eat myself. I should be with myself. Why look for something fancy other dish. Local ingredients, that's me. Fresh, here I am, ok, be with it.

So that's really what he's meaning because we suffer from imagination. I can always imagine that it would be amazing to go to Mount Kailash. Why? It's a holy Mountain. What makes it holy? *Oh, so many great saints have been there.* Wait a minute, the buddha's most important teaching, all things are impermanent. Milarepa was there, when? 1000 years ago? The blessing

is still there? The blessing's not impermanent? The Buddha said, 'all things are impermanent'. *But it's a holy Mountain don't you know?* No, I don't know. You BELIEVE. I'm glad you believe, I'm not going to interrupt your devotion and your belief, but it's an irrational belief. It's an irrational belief.

Understanding the nature of projection

We should go to Bodhgaya. This is called Vajrasana, the indestructible place where the Buddha gained enlightenment. Where is Vajrasana? It's in your heart. Your heart is where all the buddha's get enlightened. You don't need to go on a pilgrimage, if you find your own mind, every Buddha is enlightened on that point. They awaken to emptiness. So all these journeys are not necessary because you're seeking for something which you have projected far away. You project your idealisation into these people. So this is so important to understand the nature of projection. You can project the negative into people, call them terrorists, and kill them. You can project the positive into people and call them the führer, the leader, the one to be obeyed. You can project everything outside of yourself. He is saying, 'don't project', 'don't imagine', 'SEE'. Don't look, just see. It's here, nothing is hidden.

So this is very helpful for us, when we feel tempted to go and do something, we have to think oh, this makes my ego happy. Maybe I should clean the butter lamps, I should help prepare the offering. Why? Why am I doing this? Because it's good, it gives me something to do. My teacher always said that in Tibet, it was a great blessing that there were so many monks because when the monks were in the monastery they weren't out robbing and raping and murdering. This was a great blessing because the monastery is like a prison for crazy men. It's very useful to hear the shadow side of life, not all holy. Monasteries are full of politics and bad behaviour. There was child abuse also in Tibetan monasteries, all kinds of exploitation, and why not? Just because you call something holy doesn't make it holy. The Vatican itself is not free of financial shenanigans, sexual exploitation and so on. If this present Pope isn't poisoned it will be a great surprise, because there are plenty of people in the Vatican who don't like him. This is how life is, we should not be stupid. Look at your own mind.

Non-Dual: The cloud/sky analogy

Just as with the sky or a magical illusion, how could we talk of separation or non-separation in the absence of both meditation and non-meditation?

So, imagine the clear, open, blue sky it's infinite and expensive, it has no boundary. When I go back to London, I go on an aeroplane, it goes up into Swiss air space, then it goes in to French airspace, then it goes to British airspace. We call that airspace as if the space could be owned by a country. But actually it's one sky without intrinsic limitation. French airspace is a convention, it's an agreement under law, International law. It's artificial, the sky itself has no boundaries. So, with this example, with the sky, how can we talk of separation or non-separation?

You're looking in the clear blue sky and then you see a little wisp of cloud arising. There is the sky and the cloud. But the cloud is in the sky, so we have sky/cloud. Non-dual. When we make the opposition, sky and cloud, two things back to back in opposition. *Because it's cloudy I can't see the sky.* This is not true. You see the sky/cloud. The cloud is in the sky, the sky is showing itself as cloud. You say, *no! the sky is really blue, really, and the cloud is hiding the sky.* Really? The cloud is the sky. It's like the breath of the sky. You can't take the cloud out of the sky. The cloud is sky born. It's sky inhabiting, it's sky dissolving. How would you take it out of the sky?

So that's the central point. Your thoughts, your feelings, your negative, limiting, self-hating, bad moods, your confusion about life, *what should I be doing? Did I make a mistake with my eldest child? I should've been a bit different, I'm better with the second one.* All these kinds of thoughts which can arise in people's minds. These are clouds in the sky. This is thought inside the open field of awareness. Stay with the awareness, if you stay with the open awareness you don't have to block the thought. If you fall into the thought, you lose the presence of the awareness. It's just that simple. That's why we just sit and we're started. We don't need preliminary practices or lots of prayers or anything like that. When you do a prayer you make a division between profane, ordinary and sacred, holy, special. We're not doing that.

This is what he says, **separation and non-separation**, we don't have that. **Meditation and non-meditation**, we don't have that. If you stay as the sky

whether you're kissing or having a cup of coffee, doing the shopping, they are all movement in space. There is no separation of the movement from the space like the wave and the ocean.

So we observe this in our own mind, when I get distracted in meditation where do I go? I'm in a thought in my mind, I haven't left my mind but it is as if I haven't left my mind. I am IN my mind.

Hello my name is Mary this is my first day in school and I hope I'm going to get lots of friends here because I'm very excited, you look like a very nice bunch of girls and I hope we're going to have a nice time. Look, my mum's given me lots of chocolate. If you like you can eat some of my chocolate...

You can be anyone you like. We are not fixed, everything is theatre. Everything is theatre. This is the great thing now. With this whole movement of transexualism, I think its a bit extreme, I would prefer to have an International Dread Day, that would be much more fun, don't go near the surgeon my friend, leave that, just enjoy the clots. Its so important to be playful. Seriousness is death. Holy Dharma, *oh you have to do this. The lama is very special.* CR lama was very clear nothing is very special, everything is empty from the beginning. This is exactly what Maitripa says, 'everything is empty', nothing is special. Concepts make special. Concepts make good, bad, right, wrong, inside, high, low, friend, enemy, these are concepts.

The nature of concepts

So what he says here just as with the sky or a magical illusion for example a rainbow or a mirage. Mirage, a magical illusion, you see water on the road, there is no water but you see water. If you don't see the mirage, open your eyes, you're driving the car, you see the water, there's no water, you see it, yes/no. Yes/no. Illusion, that's what illusion is. So how can you talk of separation or non-separation. The mirage is real? no, it's not. The mirage doesn't exist? yes, it does. You can't do it with either/or. It's both/and, all illusion is both/and. You see a rainbow, there is nothing there, and there is. Both/and. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form. This is mainstream Buddhist understanding.

Where is this separation or non-separation? It's in the absence of meditation and non-meditation. So when we sit we just sit. You can do it on the bus or in a café, you could do it at work you're working away and then you just take two minutes, and you're just there. Just sitting. Are you meditating? What are the signs? You're not doing anything, there is no mantras, there is no holy positions, no mudras, nothing. You're not visualising anything you're just being with your thoughts. Other people in the office are also being with their thoughts, they're daydreaming. We're not daydreaming, we are sitting with our thoughts, we are present with what is arising. Is this meditation? Is this non-meditation? How could you say? These are categories of interpretation. These are conceptual categories.

So in the tradition it says, 'when ignorance arises in the mind and you have the sense of a subject and an object, there's a lot of stuff'. As soon as you are not seeing the integrated field of emergence, you're seeing a whole lot of things. So, what are these things? So the mind goes in to naming and organising according to categories. And the basic structure of categorisation is polarities: High/low, inside/outside, good/bad, right/wrong, hot/cold, vegetable/non-vegetable, expensive/not expensive. Every aspect of our life is understood by us in terms of polarities.

So we have modern art, we have sub groupings in modern art. Every aspect of academic life now has more and more subdivisions. You used to just have sociology, now you have bio-sociology that is concerned with aspects of how biology interacts with human behaviour. You get neuro-sociology which is concerned with brain function. Subdivision after subdivision after subdivision. So some are like more pure science or impure. Some are closer to the mainstream some are further away. You do it on polarity, it's all on polarities. And what are polarities? Both/and, separated and put back to back and separated. The fact is you don't have hot without cold. Hot and cold are born together, they are twins, they are Siamese twins. Unfortunately there was a mad surgeon called ignorance, and he is very fond of the scalpel. He took the scalpel, whack, and separated the twins. So now we have hot and cold as two separate things. But hot is looking for cold and cold is looking for hot. Because they don't exist without each other. That's the nature of concepts. No concept is self-existing. All

concepts are dialogical that is to say they are part of a conversation. Does this make sense?

So, therefore, when we say, this is a really nice person, by implication someone else is horrible. If everybody was nice there would be no point to say it. So the fact that you are marvellous means that there's some total shit sitting behind you somewhere. You need both otherwise the mind would collapse. So actually there is both/and. People are good and bad. It takes us a while to realise this. You look, and you look, and you look and your poor little heart gets broken again and again and you suddenly think *huh! even the nice people spit in my mouth. How is this possible? Ha! Madam Melanie Klein. We are drawn towards paranoid, schizoid, splitting. That is to say we want to protect the good object so we extract the bad from the good, purify it, our idealised object, and then we've got the demon.*

So we have capitalism/hero, communism/devil. There's a lot of that thinking around at the moment, this is a splitting. If communism was to come into contact with capitalism, it would collapse which is why Trump is likely to be re-elected because Bernie Sanders says, *I'm a socialist*. Socialist means communist, communist means enemy of America. Fuck you! It's a hard world. He tries to bring it together, and it's interesting because Melanie Klein said that when we develop psychologically and we are able to hold the tension between good and bad, liking and disliking, this position is called the depressive position. It's not a bundle of laughs.

It's hard work to hang onto the idea that I love someone who annoys me. Because if I go into the annoyance I want to say, *'just go, I've had enough, we've talked about it, I can't put up with it'*. Cutting off your nose to spite your face. *I love you but you annoy me*. Take out the 'but', put in an 'and'. Say, *I love you **and** you annoy me. It's amazing to love such an annoying person*. Then it's very different, it's such a small change from BUT to AND. But of course it's not that simple because like a little damaru, like a little two headed drum, and/but, I love you and I hate you, I hate you but I love you, and I hate you but I love you.

This is the human being isn't it? We have to hold the tension and not act it out, not turn people into demons and want to destroy them. No more holocausts, no more annihilations, but inclusion. But the inclusion is

including diversity. And diversity means I can't predict how you're going to behave. I can't predict how I'm going to behave. I certainly can't predict how you guys are going to behave. So I have to be tolerant. So, what really annoys me about you is that I formulate my plan, I try to make it very clear what that plan is, and you go against it. Why would you do that? Why did you do it? I told you, come on. People fight about that a lot. The exit is that don't make a plan.

Do planning with others. Co-create, co-emerge. It's difficult. But that's the great thing about the Mahamudra teachings, these were given live in the jungle, under the trees with whoever was there. This was taught by Maitripa to Marpa, Marpa came from Tibet and he met him and he taught him in this way and he wrote it down, he took it back to Tibet, translated it, and so we have it available to us. It's not a big thing. It was a gift and it's a beautiful gift, and it's very helpful to us. But it's nothing to be idealised. It's something to be massaged into yourself because this text only has meaning if it's flowing through you like your own blood. If it's with you in every situation. So you go into your positioning, ahh, and you relax out of it.

Co-creation and co-emergence

This text means soften, and soften, and soften, and soften. Keep softening. Soften doesn't mean victim, it doesn't mean passive or useless. It doesn't mean that the world will just kick you around. What it means is that if you have plasticity, malleability, you can move, and if you move you can shape with the other. What is your proper shape? How are you? Are you always like this? No! So how are you? All we can say is: this is how I am now. Will you be like this tomorrow? I don't know. So I'm going, if I don't die tonight, I will be how I am tomorrow but I don't know. I am not making me how I am tomorrow. Oh, what does that mean?

I am co-emergent with many factors and that will give rise to me as I am tomorrow. It's not me doing it. I am not the master, I'm not the slave. I'm something in the middle, I am a participant. So if I'm a participant, and what's important in life is to be part of the game, if I want to be on the inside where I am, then I join in. This is what we learn when we're children. On Saturday, when you go to play with your friends and you hang out on the corner and you say what shall we do? And someone says, *let's get our*

bikes. *Oh I don't want to do that. Well, we're all going. Oh, I'll get mine, I'm on the inside, I'm in the gang. Hurray!* And that's wonderful. Have we got that? Did we lose that someplace because we are being true to ourselves?

So this is all he's meaning here that observe yourself, when you get rigid, when you take up your position, is it helpful? What are you protecting inside? Actually to belong, to participate, to be connected with other people with compassion, with interest, with enjoyment, this helps them to come alive and it helps us to come alive. So when we say, *I'm not in the mood.* We really have to think, what is that? I will privilege my mood more than participating. So I'll go and sit in my mood which is the truth of my existence while you guys all go and have a drink somewhere. What is happening there? What am I relating to? I'm not letting you take me out of my mood. I'm feeling a bit down but ok. *Do you mind if I just come and sit with you probably I won't talk very much.* Then you go along, you have a beer, you start to laugh because you started to get into it. This is so precious isn't it?

You know when you work with people especially difficult teenagers, it's exactly there you have to be, you have to find them. You have to find them and just come on the inside, you're on the inside. Are we all separate? We're like cats, you know cats go into the bushes to have their babies, they don't want anyone there, it's defensive and protective but it means it's also very isolated. They go into the bushes to die if they're not a domestic cat. They do it alone. We are more social creatures.

So what this means is don't make divisions of meditation and non-meditation. Don't start with the thought start with the generosity. I'm going to give myself to the practice, I'm going to give myself to the situation. That is to say, *here I am.* Whether it's 'here I am' as open and empty or 'here I am' as rich availability or ' here I am' in just this moment, we're living, we're connecting.

'Opening to yourself' is the basis for 'opening to the world'

Wisdom means the wisdom of understanding emptiness. Compassion means connectivity. The most important part of compassion is to look at someone and say hello, and then you're there. The other person is not

alone. You can't help people without connecting with them. And you can't connect with someone if you're full of your own stuff. So, right at the beginning he's saying, in the beginning of this third paragraph:

Remain relaxed in uncontrived presence.

Uncontrived presence means you are available. You're just present. Then he's saying with this link how would you make a difference between meditation and non-meditation? So when we're just sitting, we get up and we do different things we're just there. Whether you go to a cafe or you go home or you're chatting with someone, you're with them undistracted. You give them all of you in that moment. You're not binding into any contract, you're not going to say I'm going to love you forever or I'm always going to be with you. But in this moment, if I'm with you, I'm with you. Where else would I be putting myself? Because we're here. *Oh, I've got to think about that. It's not here.* When you're there, think about that, when you're here be here. If you're in your atelier and you're painting or you're writing poetry, whatever you're doing, you're just doing that.

C. R. Lama always said that the basis of meditation is 'door close'. Close the door, do the practice. Give yourself to the practice and then when you open the door, you give yourself to the world. You open to yourself and that's a basis for opening to the world. Open to yourself and you really go deep in it, this is emptiness. When you open to the world and you connect, this is compassion. That's not very deep, that's like the waves in the ocean, up... then in deep... oh, ahh, oh, ahh, forever... this is the meaning of Mahamudra. Let's do one last sitting and then we stop for the day.

Ok. So we meet tomorrow in the morning and some people are meeting here in the evening to enjoy some time together. What ever you choose, in whatever situation you're in, try to keep the flavour of today. Don't consciously observe but just note from time to time, are you getting merged in what is going on? If so, just relax in the out breath, and open to the space, and experience your talking and walking within the space, within the common space. The big problem is our isolation and our separation, so whenever you find you are wrapping yourself in your thoughts just breathe out and here you are, connect with the people and be in the flow of things.

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Sunday Session One

Practice: Easing back from identificatory fusion

We start with just some sitting in the manner we were doing yesterday, allowing ourselves to relax as much as possible, and observe when you get pulled into an identification with a particular pattern. When you notice that just very gently ease yourself back from the identificatory fusion. Not jumping back to observe it or get away from it, but just easing back so that you are present with whatever is occurring, and then we see that everything which arises passes. So you have the non-duality of movement which is ceaseless in its outer and inner forms. And this is non-dual with the stillness which never changes. So movement and stillness are not oppositional. They are in a mutual presentation, they don't generate anything, it's not dialectical. It's just, stillness is here, as the sight of awareness. And movement is what is arising, and one of the aspects of what is arising is my sense of me. So, without effort, the isolated sense of being apart from the whole, the field of experience, starts to dissolve and we are present as part of the field. It's not that the self is something to get rid of, but it's also not something to over identify with. We'll just sit a little bit.

(After the practice)

So yesterday we were looking at the importance of finding the right starting point. If you start to practice from the position that I am going to meditate, I am going to do this, then it's very difficult to do because you're taking the idea of the self, as a stable position from which to act in relation to other phenomena. And in fact self-formation is constantly forming, it is part of the process of manifestation. That's why we just relax in the out breath and observe in this intimate way, the arising and passing of all phenomena. That we are actually phenomena, we are an emergence and a vanishing everything which constitutes us. So you might say but I still have my body, my body is here. What is your body? If you say my body is here that is a concept. The concept arises in your mind for two seconds and it's gone. It seems to be pointing to something. Now direct your attention to what is

here and what is your body? It's various kinds of sensation, it is a revelation of a particular patterning. How you know that 'the body' and 'how the body is', is not exactly the same. But if we always rely on our idea of our body, we have very little space or available attention in which to let the body to reveal itself.

Don't settle into any assumption

This is the point that he makes again and again in this short text. Start with how it is, stay with that and don't settle into any assumption. It's not that you have to unsettle yourself from an assumption because if you are simply present with any assumption or belief or theory or notion that arises in your mind, you see that as a phenomena that vanishes. That's the truth of all things. Everything is impermanent. So the mind is ceaselessly arising as patternings. None of these patternings have inherent existence. None is reliable in themselves but they are moving and interactive, they are modes of communication. This is the basic difference between the general Buddhist view and ordinary understanding.

But there is also a slight difference between the general Buddhist view that there is no self and the view in the Mahamudra that you don't need to have no self, you have 'selfing', because if you didn't have a sense of self you couldn't communicate with other people. We are here in our particular pattern as it is constituted in this moment. It arises toward's the particularity of the other person. We form, or we come into formation, towards the other. In this moment just as they're coming into formation towards us. So the co-emergence of these forms in that moment is self and other. Then the form of the other, the feelings, thoughts, sensations, memories and so on, shifts and changes just as my own formation. So you have a swirling of formations that's what a conversation is. Otherwise you say something and I say, *oh yes* and it doesn't shift me in anyway but if I say *Oh really?* And then something starts to happen between us.

So from the buddhist point of view ignorance means ignoring the ground which contains everything, the inclusivity of open awareness, and on the basis of that inattention or unawareness we formulate a sense of ourselves as an entity apart. And as long as you maintain the conceptual identification of that you can make a case for it continuing. This is the narrative sense of

self. But if you attend to the phenomena, you are always changing. It doesn't mean that you don't exist.

Ceaseless change happening all the time

The middle way, which is the heart of Dharma, means neither existing nor non-existing. We are here, therefore you can't say that we don't exist but we are here changing, interacting, moving, therefore we don't exist. We don't exist as something, we are transient manifestations. So in the tradition this is appearance and emptiness. This appearance and emptiness is revealed to us through the clarity of our mind, the illuminating power of the mind which is clarity and emptiness. And this clarity arises from awareness which is inseparable from emptiness. So these three function together- awareness and emptiness, clarity and emptiness, and appearance and emptiness. And the more we relax into the practice we see that this is ceaseless. It's happening all the time. You never come to a fixed point.

So some of us were here in the evening, eating and chatting together, every moment was different every moment, kids are running around, people are talking about this, about that, there is this kind of food and that kind of food, it's a ceaseless change. If you go to a café you see the same people sit down, they stand up, the waiter comes over, they go back. It is pulsation.

You go to the railway station there's nothing but this kind of movement. Even the person behind the screen who is selling you the ticket if you look at them their body is moving they do this, they do that, they do it in interaction. It's not that they're kind of twitchy with some kind of neurological problem, but they are responding to you. They are responding, and even if you have a neurological problem that's also a dialogue. It's communication happening in messages coming, not very useful messages, but messages passing along the nervous system. It's movement, it's always movement.

Un-graspability of phenomenon

So now we return to the text and he's talking more about meditation. So we are in the fifth paragraph.

For the yogi who has this clarity all virtuous and harmful actions are liberated by directly knowing this actuality.

This simply means that when are you stay present with what is arising and passing in your mind, you really see there is nothing to grasp. Again and again, you see there is nothing to grasp. It's here, undeniably, but there is nothing to grasp. So the yogi in that state who has this clarity meaning the clarity of the un-graspability of phenomena.

All virtuous and harmful actions are liberated

That is to say if you do something helpful and you're kind to other people or you're a bit rude to someone, the action has passed. The action has passed. Hopefully you don't do anything too severe towards the other person but say you were driving your car and you were inattentive and then you kill someone. There is a moment of screeching, there's screams, there's blood on the road, the ambulance arrives, the police arrive. What are you experiencing? Movement. There is one thing and the other... The police come, they take an account, they maybe charge you, they maybe take you to the police station, they check if you've been drinking. After an accident there is nothing but movement. Something has happened. It's three seconds and then many other things are happening. Why did I do that? That was terrible. Every time you say 'that was terrible' you are massaging meaning and intensity into a moment which has gone. This is not to say that there's no difference between virtue and harmful behaviour, of course there is difference interactively. But the fact is that in and of themselves as phenomena, a virtuous action arises and passes, and a harmful action arises and passes. So, from the point of view of wisdom or insight or clarity there is no difference between something virtuous and something that is harmful.

But we live in two houses we move from the house of wisdom to the house of compassion and it makes a very big difference whether what you do is helpful or harmful. Compassion is the house of movement, it's where we are considering the patterns of movement. If you're being careful to someone, if you have an ageing parent, you go and help to tidy up their flat because they're not doing so well, you cook food and put it in the freezer for them and so on, this is activity in the service of the other. It's movement. All compassion is movement, even if you just say a prayer, *may all orphans be protected from exploiting people*, that's a movement of your mind

towards the other. You're holding in mind these children in big cities in the third world countries and you feel for them, their incredible vulnerability. Your mind is moving towards them. This is compassion.

Staying grounded in spaciousness of each moment

So compassion is where movement is meeting movement and wisdom is settling into stillness. These two are not oppositional. So when he is saying here:

(With) this clarity all virtuous and harmful actions are liberated by directly knowing this actuality.

This is not a nihilistic position in which you say, *it doesn't matter, it's all emptiness, in any case, life goes on*. That would be madness. What he's trying to do is to say that because everything is moving, this moment and each moment has its own validity. And if you're going to be available in this moment, you can't be preoccupied by that moment.

So, in the past, when I saw a lot of patients, maybe twelve in a day, twelve sessions of fifty minutes, after each patient, you see nobody. Because if you were going from one patient and you're carrying the trace of how you are with them, you meet the next person already distorted, and the welcome they get is diminished. So you see the implication for compassion.

If you really want to have connection with people, with different people, you have to relate to them as they are, that is to say you have to find the contour of their presence in the moment. How they were yesterday it's not a true indication of how they are now. Some people always read their notes before they see the patient, I'm not sure if that's useful. Because the patient comes in as they are today, in this mood, and you may have decided last week that next session we're going to talk about this. But they come in, something else has happened. You drop your plan, here you are. So there you can see why stillness, non-involvement, is actually the basis for compassion because if everything dissolves into emptiness, what it means is that fresh availability should be present with us from moment to moment. Otherwise we are preoccupied and we are stacking up our situation.

We know that so many people in busy jobs suffer from burnout, and burnout is essentially a problem of friction. When they're with someone, they get too close, they get involved, get hopes and fears, and they heat up inside, and then they can't relax and their sleep goes bad, probably drink too much alcohol and so on. So they're cooking and cooking. This is the problem of not being able to let go. They say, *no but it's really serious, you don't understand, we have to think more about it*. No you don't. You don't need to think anything about it. *Oh I was thinking about my patient last night*. Why? Have you nothing better to do? Go and look at the flowers, walk in the park, you know, chat to a friend. *No but their situation is really serious*. That's a thought. Your worrying about the patient won't solve their problem. You're not abandoning the patient by letting that moment go because there's always another moment. So you imagine, you bend towards this person, then you bend towards that person, you bend towards another person. At the end of the day you are sea sick. That's exactly how many people live. Because you're off-balance, to off-balance, to off-balance. Staying grounded but not staying grounded in I, me, myself, not being grounded in your professional identity, in being this person, but grounded in spaciousness which is available and responsive. Our responses don't come from us. We are evoked into the situation.

So if you're with small children they're just doing the strange things that they do, and you can participate or not. How would you participate? You just do it. They show you what they're into and you find yourself entering into that. You can't do it from a conceptual level. Because they don't have a concept about what they're doing and they change their mind very quickly and their bodies go this way and that. But you can just loosen up and flow with that. Because they pick something up and it's really important and then it's not in the least important all the time. So you have to let go, and let go. Each moment is fresh. But if you start thinking *but I thought we were doing this, are we not playing with this now? But why did you take all this out? We have to put this away*. Then it gets crazy because a child's not thinking like that, and also adults are not thinking like that.

The greatest delusion in life is to imagine that adults are rational, predictable and reasonable. Adults are highly irrational, and spontaneous and confused. Therefore if you don't develop a strong frame of reference and pull them into it, you're more able to stay with them and allow the

aspects of their life to unfold. This was exactly Freud's position when he moved away from hypnosis. He said that the encouragement to the patient is to free-associate, just to relax, don't edit yourself. Allow the weirdness of your life to be there, and the parallel instruction for the analyst is to have a free floating attention, not to get caught up, not to try to interpret. Almost like the mirror, just allowing whatever is arising to reveal, so you experience and experience and gradually there is a ripening of the possibility of replying. Generally, in analysis we don't talk very much because the patient is showing, and showing and showing. Because, of course as soon as you speak, you create a position which allows the other person to position themselves in relation to your position and then it becomes very locked. As Jaques Lacan said that the desire of the patient is always to be the object of desire of the analyst. So then there is a game of seduction going on which is very neurotic and limited and not very fulfilling.

Self is 'selfing' and not 'selfed'

So from the dharma point of view you can sidestep that by just staying very relaxed and open which means un-seducible, you are not pulled into the belief system of the other. That belief system is revealed, nothing is hidden but you don't have to enter into it. What this would indicate is that this very simple way of meditation allows more receptivity of how it is and more potential for responding into it according to how it is and not according to some protocol, some treatment plan, some belief system that you've got in your family about how you should behave or what you should do. You are really cooking fresh for each person, this is wonderful because it keeps you very fresh.

In my experience, Tibetan people who I know who did this kind of practice even when they're very old they are very, very fresh because they are not building up a life. People get worn out by the burden of their existence. Release and you're here, which means that the ego is not experienced then as a fixed self but it's more like the way of announcing or the way we enter into the game. But each time we enter, it's different. So in that sense there is a self but the self is 'selfing'. It's not 'selfed', there is no past tense in the self, it's not a done deal, it's never already created but it emerges with the other.

So when you're talking with one person or looking at them it's a unique moment, and it's only you, only you can have that moment with the other person. And then you look at someone else, then a different constellation arises inside you. And each of these is your self-formation. So the self is our mode of connectivity.

Strong role identity imprisons you

So, when the buddhist texts say there is an absence of inherent self-existence, that simply means that if I'm going to connect with you, I can't be in the mode I was before I was connecting with you. Because we tune in in one modality and we're going to tune in another. So if there was a true self-existence, I will always be doing the same thing. You would be like the Queen of England who is always just waving and smiling because she is in role all the time. But, as far as we know she is just a queen. That is a terrible place to be in, I would think. It's really important.

C. R. Lama used to say that it was very terrible that the Chinese invaded Tibet and many, many people became prisoners. But he said that one person was freed, and that was the Dalai Lama because he came out of the Potala Palace where he was always surrounded by his courtiers and others, and he came to India and now he can walk around and do different things which would be impossible there. This is very helpful because it means if you are locked in a role and if you have a very strong role identity, then you imprison yourself in order to sustain this enduring sense of this is who I am. But actually we probably have more life when other people take us out of ourselves. That is to say it's a blessing to be interrupted.

Now clearly if you have small kids it doesn't always feel like that. Because you have many things to do and you want to do the cooking but they're very insistent you have to help them with something. You have to make a judgement but basically to be interrupted means 'the neurotic desire to consolidate identity into something fixed and predictable' is having to be dissolved in order to open to the other. Now if you can't do that, you end up in a bad way when people have extreme forms of obsessional compulsive disorder in which they can't interrupt themselves and they don't want to be interrupted by anyone else. They say, *I have to clean this, I have to, I have to do it, I HAVE to*, and they get more and more angry because if

feels that until this action is completed, I'm not free. And then they complete it and then they're not sure if they've completed it properly, so they have to repeat it again and again. And in that way the world gets excluded.

So the fact that we can drop everything and just go in another direction and another direction shows that in that moment we are arising from our potential, not from our positioning. So that's the function of the meditation. Drop out of your positionings, your preoccupations, your current mood and just open to the mood, you don't have to change the mood, you're not changing anything, you're just un-fusing yourself from it. Then you stay with it and the object side changes, and the subject side changes and there's a presence and that presence is Rigpa, or awareness. It doesn't change and it has no fixed content at all. So from that point of view the most intimate, alert, connective, aware aspect of our aliveness is not something. It's nothing, it's no thing, it's not an entity that can be discovered. And yet it's the basis of all the movement. This non-duality is, from this point of view of this understanding, this is liberation itself.

Depression and anxiety: Part of the clarity of mind

So Maitripa says,

All mental afflictions become the great original knowing and act as the yogi's friend, just like a fire rushing through the forest.

So if we sit in this way, say, for example you're feeling a bit depressed or you're feeling a bit kind of lost in your life, feeling a bit hopeless, you're not sure what to do. You just sit. These mental afflictions, sinking kind of feeling which, maybe, have an element of envy in it, *other peoples lives are better than my life, I've made mistakes*, and so on. Its a bit sinking and heavy, it's a bit like a swamp in your mind. You just stay with that. Not merging into it, so there's no self-pity and not trying to get rid of it because if you're in a swamp you shouldn't struggle, you just stay, ok, mind is like this. And then you start to have more and more sense this metaphor of the mirror is quite accurate.

My presence is empty like the mirror, and it's always full of the reflections, and the reflections just now are patternings that are dark, heavy and

obscure and impenetrable. This is in the mirror, this is what is arising but it's not me. I become depressed by identifying with this mood. If I stay present with it, it's here and then it vanishes, and the stillness of the clarity doesn't move. But, having been close to it, it's then much easier to relate to people who actually are depressed. Because when you can say to them that they could just try to make friends with this depression and try to be a bit open to it. They get kind of pissed off and say, *what a stupid thing to say*. You can have the confidence to say, *let's try it together, we'll just sort of sit, sit with exactly how you feel, I am here with you, tell me about it. But tell me about it from in the state not as a narrative about it. Give me a, kind of, process description of it*. And then, of course, they start to say, *it's changing*. Where is your depression? *Well it's on my shoulders, I feel so burdened*. Where is it now? *It's in my belly I feel I could just vomit*. So, there is a whole series of movements and you're aware of the movement.

Most of the time your awareness collapses into the movement and then you're lost. But when you're telling me about it that you have some lucidity, some clarity, and you feel you're in it. Then you're, kind of 'in' it and 'out' of it at the same time. So this is the first taste of the experience of the mirror that the reflection is in the mirror. I know I'm depressed, that's different from being depressed. Knowing that you're depressed doesn't stop the depression but it's just like a very fine wedge that's opening up the space to see.

So, again, this is the sense of non-duality. Not two, but also not one. It's not just one thing where I'm collapsed in depression, I can't think, and can hardly breathe and I'm under the duvet. It's not two either, I'm not free of 'it', I am with 'it' but not only 'it'. So that's the meaning of depression.

When you feel anxious, don't take what is arising as the enemy. Anxiety is not stealing your life. It's not persecuting you. It's part of the flavouring, the colouration of your existence which is why he says, these afflictions, things like anger, aversion, pride and so on, **'act as the yogi's friend'** because they become, or it becomes clear that they have always been part of the original clarity of the mind. Because you're able to see what it is. This is anxiety. Anxiety is sensation in the body, thoughts, predictions, shifts in the breathing, muscles are tense, and so on. This is the arousal, you can start to feel adrenaline moving up in the sympathetic nervous system. You become

aware that you're becoming stupid because your frontal lobes can't operate so well.

Then he says, 'this is like a wildfire running through a forest', it burns up everything. Traditional example of this is, when you have some coconut coir matting or some rough rope and you light it at one end it will glow and burn all the way through, and at the end the ash is in the shape of the material. So, something is taken out but the form is the same. So, it's the same, the depression or the anxiety is there, but some, kind of, sense of thingness is removed, it's just like ash. Or like a rainbow in the sky or a mirage. It's there, something is there, but it lacks the power to catch you and contort you and change you. So this is freedom without changing anything. That's why it's an intrinsic freedom, it's not a freedom produced by acting on a situation to make it different, make it better. But you find that awareness, like the mirror, is always free no matter what kind of reflection is arising in it.

Self-criticism: An idea/ a belief about yourself

So this is really, really helpful. Because in our lives all kinds of difficulties arise, worries arise, confusions. We make decisions they may not be so good, you have to live with the consequences of them. At that point regrets can arise, self-criticism can arise, all sorts of things can arise. What is their status? What is the truth status of this mental event? Is it telling me the truth about myself? As if I am someone being written on.

There is a story by France Kafka called The Penal Colony, the prison colony. This inspector goes to an island and wonders around and eventually he comes to a place where there is a huge machine and it has lots of needles in it. The prisoner is put inside and they have a piece of paper, like these old pianola things where you had a written thing, you put it in the piano, you turn it and the piano keys play. They put this into the machine and the needles write to the charges on the prisoners back. They are permanently marked with their crimes.

So this is often how we feel, *I shouldn't have done it, I'm really stupid, I hate myself, why did I do that? It'll never be good, I broke that relationship, I'll miss her forever.* All kinds of thoughts torment people. And the moment is

gone. What is actually happening is that they're in a nightmare where they're being persecuted by ghosts. Because the past is gone. *But I miss her.* Who do you miss? You miss your idea of that person. When did you break up? *Three years ago, I can't stop thinking about her.* So you think she is still the same three years later? She is now with someone else, I hear they've just had a kid. So who is it that you miss? You miss an idea in your mind. This is your mind, this is attachment, you can't let go of the idea, and because the idea is invested with this feeling, it seems so real, it's tearing you apart. But it's just like a mirage, there is nothing there.

So this kind of practice is very, very helpful because you see that the walls of your prison are even less robust than a traditional Japanese house with paper walls. You can walk right through these walls, there is nothing there. What holds the walls in place is your belief that says, *I screwed up, this is terrible, why did I do that?*

For example Mahatma Gandhi, who was from an early childhood a bit anxious, driving, became a lawyer, wanted to be a good guy. After his training in England he went back to India and his father is sick so he goes with his new wife to visit his father. He sits with the father all the morning, in the afternoon it's hot, everybody lies down, so he lies down with his wife and they have sex. And while they're having sex, his father dies. So they come out of the bedroom all kind of woo, woo. Your father is dead. He thinks, *oh God! I wasn't there, I wasn't there for my father.* And this thought runs in his mind until he dies. That he has done this terrible thing by not being there. He did so many things, he helped so many people in all kinds of ways, but this, like a poisonous dart in his heart. So much was spinning around in that, and we can understand why! So it made him incredibly strange around sex, he stopped having sex with his wife, he used to get his young nieces, girls to lie naked in bed with him so that he would be able to resist the temptation. He became a little bit, kind of neurotic you could say. But we can understand why because he couldn't let go of- *I did this, I shouldn't have done that, my father died without seeing my face, I abandoned him, blah blah blah.* You can just imagine the mushroom of negative thoughts that get generate.

So we can observe that kind of thing in our own minds, we are doing that. This one incident was like a balloon, and every day he's blowing it up and

blowing it up and the balloon gets big and in the night the air comes out a little bit. First thing you wake up in the morning and you pump up your balloon, *I'm a really bad guy*. And on the basis of that I have to make reparation, I have to be good, and helpful all the time, and kind and so on. It was gone, the event was over. It was one of these things that happened. We are not saying it's great, but it's empty. It doesn't exist anywhere except in the mind that's holding it, that won't let go of it. Because if I let go of it, in English we'd say I've let myself off the hook, and that would be terrible because I did something bad, really bad, so I have to stay hooked on this forever. This is a kind of madness.

The goal is equanimity

We know what happened with the Treaty of Versailles when the French in particular were pushing for punitive terms against the Germans for the war and this led to a couple of years of joy and getting more coal from the Ruhr and so on. But then gradually as the economic situation in Germany was changing, there was more resistance, then with the collapse of the Weimar Republic we get Adolf Hitler, directly related to the Treaty of Versailles. And then now, at the end of the Second World War, that's completely different. The Marshall plan came in and rebuild Germany. It probably was a better outcome. *But why should the people who started the war be rewarded? That's not fair.* Life goes on. *But they were really bad, look at all the bad things they did.* The most important thing in that sentence is the tense of the verb. Look at all the bad things they did. DID, it's past, it's gone.

But in Britain on the war memorials they always have this inscribed: 'lest we forget'. We should remember the dead, we should remember the war, we should never forgive. It's very interesting isn't it? Because if you don't forgive then you have to say these people are our enemies forever and ever, look what they did. The Scottish feel that about the English, there is a lot of hatred. And when the former Yugoslavia had this war was starting, this mad group analyst who trained in Britain, Karadžić, he was singing the song of Kosovo which is the song against the muslims and he used it to whip up the crowds with the idea now we will kill all the Muslims. They did, they killed many, many thousands of Muslims on the basis that 600 years ago the Muslims had been pushing into that territory and had killed people.

So from the Buddhist point of view, yes, terrible things were done by other people and by us. It's not that they didn't happen, but you have to take the libido or the 'prana' or the 'chi' out of them because if they remain buzzing and vital, they will hook you and catch you and you find yourself in revenge and hatred. And the goal is equanimity because if you have equanimity then everything is even and if it's even then compassion goes in all directions.

Reifying essentialism is blindness

When Mao Tse Tung died we burned a lot of butter lamps for him and did a lot of meditation when I was in India, a lot of Puja practice for this man who had pretty much destroyed Buddhism in Tibet. And the reason for doing that was that he had harmed so many people, he's going to be in a bad situation, so we should help him. So there the focus is on the potential which manifested due to causes and conditions as Mao Tse Tung in a form which was harmful and completely blinkered and embittered. But that's not the whole of that person's potential. That's one very narrow slice.

So if you essentialise Mao Tse Tung or Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and you say that's a really bad person look what they did and look and look, and you make it very condensed. Not only do you make them very one-sided because they had other aspects to themselves, but you make yourself stupid. Because you're focusing on a form as if it was an eternal truth. And when you do that you ignore the potential beneath that form. Due to causes and conditions, these people arose like in Rwanda, between the Tutsi and the Hutu, and there are so many stories all over the world of groups fighting each other, and being full of hatred and it's always because they essentialise the other people by thinking, *we know who you are and we know what you're like*. So this meditation is the absolute root of infinite compassion. Compassion for everyone.

Although patterns arise and negative behaviour is enacted this is not a true definition of the significance or value of the person who did it. Therefore we should always pray for torturers or cruel people, for cheaters or liars, for people who rape old women. There's all kinds of people who do behaviour that you feel total disgust with which is all the more reason to pray for them because they do that because they are blind. Just like Jesus said, 'forgive

them father they know not what they do'. So if they don't know what they do and we then say that they're a bunch of arseholes, we don't know who they are, so you get double blindness. This is quite challenging, quite challenging. But it's where you see the substantiating, the reifying essentialism that says, 'you are a bad person because you did this and therefore you are truly bad, always bad'. This is stupidity, this is a blindness.

So this is really what he is meaning that the Yogi who sees that everything is arising out of emptiness finds nothing inherently good and nothing inherently bad. The good and the bad are situational, they are relative. They belong to conventional truth, relative truth. They are not the absolute, the absolute is open and empty and within that everything is even. These are true simultaneously.

So, if you like, the absolute truth of Adolf Hitler is form and emptiness, sign and emptiness, movement and emptiness. Everything he did was the play of emptiness. But in relative truth, in relation to particular minority populations, the patterns he enacted were deadly and murderous and cruel. So this is not to say that he was a good person but to say that goodness and badness around the person is, to locate yourself and your understanding solely on the level of the person.

Three aspects of existence

So, he's not elaborating it in this text but basically there are three aspects to our existence. The mind itself that is our awareness is not something you can find and yet it's there. So presence is ungraspable yet undeniable. This awareness which is a revealing or a kind of illuminating capacity, illuminates what is showing which is the 'field of experience'. It's called the field of clarity, this is how the world expresses itself. And within that field, as we looked yesterday, we have the individual flowers which is ourselves manifesting gestures moment by moment interactively. So these three aspects are inseparable.

So when we are born into this human domain and we don't understand these aspects, all we have is the third domain where I'm just me, I'm just me because I'm me! I don't have any sense of an open ground. I don't have any sense of being a participant in a world I am inseparable from. I start from a

place of isolation. So the view from ignorance or ignoring non-duality, is to be in duality in which I am absolutely separate from you, I am never going to be the same as you, you are completely other than me, and I am just like this.

So, in order to have a sense of the stability of myself I embed my identity in narrative, in conceptual construct. Like we looked yesterday, I was born in that country. My parents were like that. I went to this kind of school, da, da, da. You join all the dots, and you make this pattern, this is me. But where's the emptiness, where's the clarity?

So, it's when we are cut off from our own ground and we particularise, if this particularisation is informed by good karma, or beneficent qualities you end up as a kind of good person, you're more thoughtful for others, you want to help, and so on. But if this patterning is informed by more maleficent or malignant, negative qualities you find yourself bullying other people, exploiting them, and giving them a hard time, and it feels natural to you. *Why wouldn't I be the boss, why wouldn't I tell people what to do? That's what I do. My dad did that, my mum did that, it's what I do. It's normal in that particular formation.* In another family you grew up, we don't do that here, this is not how we behave. We always put the other first. So that's, if you like, your luck in how you are born.

From a dharma point of view, the patterning is generated by previous lives. But you're still cut off from your ground. So even if you're a good person your goodness is arising from previous lives, previous actions. There is no inherent goodness; it's a transient manifesting of tendencies which exhaust themselves. Manifestation can be good or bad. The one thing which effortlessly helps us to be good is if we open to our own ground. Because when you open and you feel the connection with everyone else, you start with the connectivity.

So you look in someone's face, you see their eyes, how could you hurt them? It's very difficult to hurt someone when you look at their face and you see their face and you receive their eyes through your eyes into your heart. If you don't see them but you just tell them who they are, *we know who you are, I've looked at your file, you're a member of the party. You are forbidden.* Now you're telling the person who they are. You don't want to receive

anything from them. You're going to fill them with your idea and then you can kill them. And, of course, a quick way to kill is a bullet in the back of the head, because then you don't see their face, in case somehow they could glance at you and catch you and invoke some pity, and you don't want to have any pity.

So if you see this, then the practice is very deep; wherever you go, all the time, you stay in connection. Stay in connection, and what you experience is all these myriad kinds of people with their lives. Yesterday, when we went for lunch in the café, as we came in there was an old man sitting with his glass of wine, in about five minutes he smoked three cigarettes, his hand was a bit trembling, that was his world. And then there was a couple falling in love, and there were family groups. All these different potentials arising. These are all the forms of emptiness, they're all valid. We say, *I like, I don't like*. What is it you don't like? *The bits that I don't like*. The value of this person is how they are for me, it's self-referential. Prejudice is self-referential. It looks like it's saying something about you but it's saying something about me. So when you dissolve that prejudice everyone is interesting. How they live, it's incredible. How would you have that kind of life? Why would you want to be like that. Fascinating. How are you? And then something begins. So there is a lot in these simple sentences.

Going or staying is like a decision that we make. You say, *I'm going to do this, I'm not going to do this*, saying yes or saying no, making changes or not making changes, he is saying this is established from a self-referential position. When you open to the ground you find there is no self-referential position. So going and staying doesn't arise. You find that your life is taken by these different events. It's just like that, it happens to be like that.

So, I'm a bit tired and I don't take on new patients but somebody phoned me and they knew someone else and I saw them for supervision so I said to them I only can see you for few sessions. She said ok. Then at the end of the few sessions I said why don't we have a few more. I can see this is going to go on for a long time, because when I look at her face and she's so interested in what we're doing how can I say, no? Why would I stop? *Yeah but I'm a bit tired*. That's not the point, the point is this is interesting. So, the face is the most important thing.

Ngo-wo, rang-zhin and thuk-jé

In Tibetan these three aspects called: *ngo-wo*, *rang-zhin* and *thuk-jé*. *Ngo-wo* means face, and refers to our original face. *Rang-zhin* refers to the complexion. So, when you look at someone's face there is a kind of formation and then their health or their sickness shines through as their complexion. The quality of the skin, and the eyes shining, and so on. And the third is called *thuk-jé* which means compassion but it's the expressive quality of the face as well whether you're smiling, frowning, you're available or not available. These are the qualities of embodied being, of being present in the world.

Not being artificial

Our original face – in the Zen tradition they talk about the face you had before you were born – your unborn face that is emptiness. With the unborn face the complexion is the arising of the showing of the potential. And that potential manifests in the particularity of, like the individual flower, it's your expression in this moment.

So when we are here together and we have a break we chat a little bit to different people. With some of the people you find it easy to talk to. You have a lot to say. With other people you just, kind of smile at them, there's nothing much to say.

This is very important. This is so important if you practice dharma to renounce being a nice person. Petty bourgeois attitude is the death of dharma because it's artificial and it's a pretence. If you stay with the energy of your belly, what you will find it's the 'energy of the field'- the synergy or non-synergy that arises between people. So at the very beginning of the text he is talking about not being artificial, not being contrived. If there's nothing much to say, there's nothing much to say. You don't hate the person but you just find it okay, you say, *good luck, have a good life, it's fine*. With someone else you're blethering away about this and that and that's just whirls of energy, like the sky is sometimes still and then a gust of wind comes. When it's still it's still, and when a gust comes, it's gust.

So, it's so important to allow your life to be there because if you feel there's nothing to say, you're not abandoning the person, you're not saying Go

away, you're horrible, I hate you, I never want to see you again. It's not negative, it's neutral. It is how it is. But surely we should be friendly to everyone? Well you try, you smile and then you see what happens. Nothing much coming up and you're still friendly but it's neutral. So that's what he means by not being artificial. When you have an agenda or a set of cultural expectations and you produce these and reproduce these, you are going through the motions. It is pretence. How will you have authentic meeting with someone else?

Probably in our life we don't have deeply authentic contact with many, many people. Just a few moments but they're very deep, when you connect with someone, wow, and it stays with you through your life. So, doing this superficial, it's all nice, nice, you could be on a reception desk in a Hilton Hotel, it's what you would do. Put on a bit of lipstick, put on your high heel shoes, smile and say, *Hello, good morning, such a pleasure to have you here again Mr Jones.* It's so plastic and so artificial and Mr Jones is also thinking, *Why are you so pleased? You don't know who I am, you don't need to say my name, leave me alone.* So authenticity can only reveal itself if the space of connectivity isn't filled with artificiality.

Ok, let's take a twenty minute break here and then come back and do a bit more sitting.

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Sunday Session Two

The world is revealed to you from your positioning

We've covered quite a lot of ground in these last days. Are there any questions around, you'd like to raise, things which are not clear or you have some ideas about?

Audience: *I just wanted to have your idea about, when you said, for example, for Hitler, you cannot say he's 100% bad, he's just only the person in the history and so on. But, now if you are living in the time of Hitler and somehow you have the choice between pressing on the trigger or not, will*

you consider the fact that he can be someone else and he's not only the torturer, the dictator. Or would you think he is too harmful for the rest of humanity and it's better to shoot him down?

James: But if you have your gun and you're ready to shoot Hitler and his mother appears and she says, *but this is my boy. You don't know him, he's really quite a good guy.* So for his mother maybe he is quite good boy.

Audience: *But for the six million Jews who are in the concentration camps?*

James: I agree. But the fact is that he will have shown certain aspects. We know that these commandants from the murder camps were going home in the evening and listening to Brahms and playing with their children. So their children saw a different aspect of the person. Certainly from the Buddhist point of view we are like crystals. We have many different facets and when one particular facet is turned out towards other people, it appears that they are like that. And so you come to a totalised conclusion about them, but that totalisation is not the whole story. It's a grasping one.

If I were Palestinian I would not be thinking Israel is a great country but lots of Israelis think that it's a great country. They're on the beach at the weekend having a nice time. For them, it's a great place to live. In fact, they don't think the Palestinians are very nice. So they have completely conflicted histories about what's going on here. It's interpreted. So, if you take the view from here and it looks like that and then you walk around and see the view from there, it's different. So life is like a sculpture, every step you take walking around it, something new is revealed.

So on the basis of this, being positioned here at suffering, I say 'this is a very bad person' because they cause me to suffer. But we could say that when these Jewish people were cleared out of the ghettos the houses were left behind empty, other people moved into these houses and were very grateful that these people had been removed and now they get a house. *I get a nice house, and nice furniture as well because they didn't take anything when they left. It's amazing. Look we have got knives and forks and plates and everything, it's wonderful.* So, you might say these are selfish greedy bad people without any pity or compassion. Inside their frame of

reference they might think that they are very lucky, *since we also could have been killed but we survived and we got all this.*

So, oral history is really interesting, there's so much of it now. Interviewing people from all the different positions and what they felt, interviews with prison guards, interviews with people who were doing the torturing, interviews with people who were tortured. Each of them is saying from here, from my position, this is the world revealed to me. They wouldn't have come into the prison if they weren't bad. So if you work for the state and believe in the state, it's reasonable to say that. But the person who is taken to the prison says that the state is the enemy, it has turned it's back on the people and now, *I had to protest on behalf of the people and this is what the state did to me. So the state is terrible.* Other would say, *no! the state is our father, the president is our father.* These things are very tricky. This is why in Buddhism we call it relative truth because it's always determined by your position.

Audience: *But does it mean that any political action is senseless?*

James: No. I mean when someone is taken to the international court in The Hague and the charges are brought against them, some people will agree with this, some people will say that court is illegal and they don't accept it.

The Americans are very clear that none of their soldiers should be tried by any court outside of America. They are unaccountable. We are willing to invade every country in the world if it suits our purposes but we will not be accountable to anyone else except ourselves. That wouldn't look like justice and ethics to most of us but they are powerful enough to be able to say that. It's a messy business, it's a messy business because it's energy. You can't grasp energy. Is it good? Is it bad? It depends on the interpretation. This is not to say that there are no ethics. It's simply to say that we have strong tendency to be lying and cheating and self-serving, and we privilege our own position. So, from a dharma point of view what we see is that as long as you find yourself located in your body as a thing looking out at other people, the likelihood that you will be harmful is quite great. Because I am more important than you... to me. You are more important to you than me. So that separation and that privileging of oneself immediately introduces a bias.

Truth is 'inclusive'

So in Buddhism we are always saying things like may all sentient beings be happy, and that includes the worms and all the fish and the birds and the people in the different realms. May all be happy, because we're trying to get away from exclusivity. So, ignorance and separation and the birth of the ego as seemingly autonomous entity says that the basic organising factor of our world is exclusivity. I am me because I am not you and I am not like them, they are other. So I've pushed them out in order to have the arena for me.

So with all these campaigns in Europe to keep the, so called, illegal immigrants out. *They're not our people, why should we feed them, why should we give them a house, we have our own homeless people.* We know all these arguments because that's like saying, I am Swiss, and the more extreme thing is, Switzerland for the Swiss, but then you've got to work out well who are the real Swiss? I'm a bit uncertain about you, you spend a lot of time thinking about Eastern thought, what about good Swiss values? What do you really believe about Switzerland? You people you do all this funny eastern stuff and now you're going to have Chinese food for lunch on a Sunday! What kind of Swiss value is this? (Audience is laughing). You know there's all kinds of hierarchies of who would be the real Swiss, the true Swiss. In fact probably French-speaking people are not really Swiss at all if you are in Zürich. So it's always relative. It depends on where we sit.

Now if you relativise too much you end up with nothing, and you have so many holes in the pot everything drains out. But then the thing is, I have thought about this a long time, I'm sure I've covered all the different possibilities, I'm sure I've come to a reasonable conclusion, and therefore I am going to impose it. Now if I have power I could do that, if I am a judge I can bring my opinion in. You will have a different opinion so you pay money to get a barrister to fight the barrister who's defending the states position, and then you have conflict.

Now from the buddhist point of view, it's impossible to establish truth through conflict because truth itself is inclusive. And therefore you have to have inclusivity and collaboration and cooperation in order to let the truth

of the situation arise. Which would be that we have diversity and therefore the different voices, all must be heard. I mean, this is the position of liberal democracies, it's fading pretty fast but it used to be twenty years ago quite strong, everybody's voice must be heard even extremist voices. Because if all the voices are heard and through speaking people become more available to hear, then maybe you have more conversation. But if you say you can never speak, then that person says, *What? What?* They don't want to hear that and then they're not going to hear anything else. There is no easy answer for this.

But if what you can say is in terms of their actions their activity in this life has been terrible. That's reasonable to say. Does that make them through and through a terrible person? That would be a conclusion which would again be a kind of totalisation, taking this and this and you add them up like doing arithmetic in primary school. And then the summation of the columns of the actions we draw a general conclusion that this is a terrible person. But they will have other qualities which haven't manifested in lying and cheating and killing, it manifested in something else. But that's irrelevant! Then you have a problem because you're doing a violence to the wholeness of the person when you say only these factors are relevant. So some judges, they really don't like it when there's a call for a psychiatric opinion in the court. You know and very often more right wing politicians say, *it's too much understanding not enough clarity, you did it, you're bad. Bad people do bad things.* When you look at the causes, family background and so on there are many, many causal forces going on that would lead someone to do that.

So from a dharma point of view these are all manifestations of patterns of energy which take on this shape due to causes and conditions. So you can describe the activity because it manifests in the world and if necessary you can punish people for that activity. The problem with making the definite conclusion that they are a bad person, I think one could say they are a person who has done bad things, and if we track why they did the bad things it's because of a blindness, a stigmatism, a lack of clarity in their view of the world. And if we work on that maybe it's possible for them to do something else.

Ignorance of ground leads to fixation

So, the ground of all being as emptiness, like the mirror, we say it's primordially pure. It's pure from the very beginning. Even if some horrible reflection arises in the mirror for example, somebody is cutting the heads off chickens, a big mirror in the abattoir and they're killing cows, there is blood everywhere. At the end of the day you wash down the surface of the mirror and the mirror is quite clean and put a bowl of flowers in front, the mirror shows the flowers. That's the potential of awareness it's not defined by what's arising in it.

So if we say that the essence or the heart or the depth of a person is open potential, from the Buddhist understanding would be that it is ignorance of this open ground that leads to a fixation of identity. Which means a very narrow access to the potential, so that they're operating from a very narrow base, maybe hostility or envy. People are out on a Saturday night, looking at other people having a good time, feeling, *I'm going to rob them I'm going to attack that woman because I don't get them*. You can see it cooking in their faces as they walk down the street, you want to get out of the way of them. That's an energy patterning. The basis of their potential is vast but they have got constrained due to causes and conditions.

So universal liberation would be to help people awaken to their ever open ground and that would make them intrinsically ethical. Although it's neutral and a paradox, it's profoundly ethical because it is without bias. It comes into manifestation in connectivity, if the connectivity has no bias in it, then I don't know who you are, so I have to find out who you are. So I come to you saying, *reveal yourself to me*, which is not what you do if you're going to murder or rape or torture. You start from the other position.

So certainly we can say bad things are done and the people who that should be constrained in society and not allowed to do more of it. So that generally people know you shouldn't do these things, the problem is the extra bit that says this is intrinsically a bad person.

Everything is the ripening of cause and effect

Audience: *I have the feeling that in daily life the problem is the balance between those two houses you are talking about, wisdom and compassion.*

Sometimes one must be bigger than the other and it's changing all the time, the balance between those two points of view.

James: Well, the next thing I'd say that I think it's very challenging for us. Our general frame of reference is that we only have one life. But the general Buddhist view is that we have many, many different lives we move through, these different realms and in each of our lives we have had many different behaviours, sometimes generous, sometimes selfish. And what arises for us in this life, including the family we are born into, the time that we are born into it, the kind of school we go to, whether there is a war on the horizon or whether it's peaceful a good time. All of these factors are not solely determined by me but my access to them is determined by my patterning, whether it can be evoked into that situation.

So if a child is attacked we tend to have horror. This is outrageous, poor innocent creature! But from a Dharma point of view there is no innocence the child is a participant in their attack. We find that incredibly challenging. There are no victims, everything is the ripening of cause and effect. So when you say that there is an innocent victim then you have a cruel and heartless person. You have good on one side and bad on the other. And it's much easier, you take out the scissors you cut down the middle, good guys over here bad guys over there. But this is saying that we find ourselves in these situations. So the person who is attacking the child is a sight of the manifesting of some cruel or lustful, uncaring attitude. And the child is probably also quite trusting and open to that, so the meeting of these two patternings in that moment leads to some horror and disaster. Both are implicated, both are participants. I believe this myself but I could never say that in a psychotherapy department in the hospital.

You know working with child therapy you can't say things like that. You have to say the child is innocent. Of course I am not saying that a child is inviting someone to rape them or attack them. It's not active in that way. There is a kind of alignment, a kind of constellation where things come into play. And we don't understand otherwise we just have, it's a terrible accident. For example, we've had a lot of these killings in London where somebody drives a car into the crowd and gets out with a knife stabbing people. We've had this in France as well. Who gets stabbed and who doesn't? There is ten tables outside the café and that person is going like that and

for some reason someone is stabbed and someone isn't. Or in America in the school shootings what do we say? Do we say, *well, these things happen?* Do we say, *it's an act of God? Or it's a mystery.?*

From the Buddhist point of view, they would be saying that there is some kind of click that goes there that somehow the bullet goes through you, somehow you're the one that gets stabbed. Maybe that's a completely deluded view. I mean it's postulating that the very structure of the world is intrinsically ethical, that positive actions have positive outcomes and negative actions have negative outcomes. That may be completely deluded but I personally hang onto it because otherwise it's just too crazy.

There's just these endless accidents, two planes that fell out of the sky and you say, *oh, something was wrong with the engine, or the direction system in the plane, it couldn't judge the altitude properly. What a tragic accident.* Our minds can't go any further than that. We say, *these things happen. We should take the makers to court, they did that to them.* But somehow they weren't there. It's not their fault. Because if I take this water now and throw it over you the I did it to you, you're now wet, it's my fault that you are now wet. But if the causal factors which gave rise to you getting on that particular plane are arising from a previous life, then there is something in the stream of patterning of your life which causes you to be there but it's not your fault as a person in this life who has no memory of any previous life. So I think it's certainly a very complicated area.

Multiple factors operating in a phenomenon

Audience: *But if we consider, for example, that a murderer's part of responsibility of who he is, is for example, his parents or his teachers or whoever gave him anger or whatever. But the responsibility also lies with the people who are next to him when he's committed the action. He could be stopped, so that action couldn't either be called as unfair if it can be stopped.*

James: Ok. So this would highlight the problem of the first person singular, I, this is me, I am James, so that's like a little package. But when I am aware that I am actually multiple, I am manifold; I have many different tendencies and moods, instincts and habits and so on. I am like a field within which all

kind of forces are moving and turning and I can never be quite sure which one is going to arise in the moment. So it's as if I am full of different aspects of myself and we're all in a bar and we're all a bit drunk, and it's a karaoke bar and at any moment one bit of myself can grab the microphone and start singing some song and this is me being me. And then the others tap me on the shoulder, and say, *shh enough*. And then another bit of you comes up and you do that. So we are pulsing out of these different aspects of ourselves.

You couldn't have a legal system, you couldn't have a social system unless you say, *no, you are this person*. You have one identity card, don't be greedy, you are one person, and you are accountable for everything you do. But it doesn't feel like that. So, just as when you go to the hospital one of the things they give you is a medical body, when you're walking down the street you don't have a medical body. But you go into a hospital and they're doing checks, and the doctor's are pulling your body into their system of interpretation. If you're going into the legal system you will have a legal identity, which is different from your ordinary identity.

If the police are interviewing you and you say, *oh! I don't know, I'm all over the place, sometimes I feel like this, sometimes I feel like that. I have so many conflicting ideas, I can be really angry, da, da, da*. They are writing this all down and thinking we've got a real nutter here. So you have to think, *ah, I'm talking to the police. I'm going to present myself as simple as possible. I don't want to give any hooks for them to catch on to*. We know how to play the system. We think that this is the theatre of the police interview. Experienced criminals learn how to act into that theatre. People who are arrested for the first time often don't manage it very well, they need a good solicitor.

So if we accept that we are multiple and for some reason I am going to stab you. This person is also multiple, she could be brave, she could be cowardly, she could be thinking about something else. We don't know which aspect of her is going to be evoked at the sight of the knife. One day it could be her brave self that screams or yells or phones the police or throws something at you. It could be her cowardly self or maybe she turns away and pretends not to see. Could we say that she is a coward or she is incredibly brave? If she attacks me so I don't stab you, she protects you.

Then the police come and journalists come and they take a photograph, her face is in the paper tomorrow. Amazing act of heroism in Geneva. Woman saves man from murderous attack. And her friends are thinking *brave? This one? I don't think so.* It's like that. We are complicated. That's why, in Buddhism they talk of the five poisons that these are tendencies and they pulse forward and back.

What do you do with that? Law is worked on the basis that people being rational subjects. Just as, in economics, they used to think there was an economic man who was rational person and would make rational choices in terms of market forces. There is not so much truth in that. We are deluded, we are under the power of all sorts of forces. Courts also do that, for example, you have a lot of night crime in London, so the magistrates, the first level of the court, they give quite heavy sentences for night crime to give an example to the others. If you stab someone, if you had done that two years ago you might get three months. But now, we make an example, you get one year. You don't get one year because of what you did as you, but you in relation to the newspaper and public opinion and a populous mood. So multiple factors are operating in these moments.

We always want to simplify the complexity of things. In Buddhism they always talk about dependent origination. On the basis of this, that arises. It's multifactorial. In wartime some people, some ordinary people, become quite vicious and cruel, others become incredibly ethical and go out of their way not to hurt other people. Something is suddenly invoked in them by the situation. They are revealed, or rather certain aspects of themselves are revealed, according to these circumstances. So, to say someone is good or bad, is probably a violence against the phenomenal truth of their presenting. In terms of their social identity it may be valid, but in terms of the complexity of the phenomena present at any moment in that person, it's an obscuration.

Are there any other thoughts about this?

The field of manifestation

Audience: *But I am rather thinking about the actual act rather than the legal point of view. Ok, I'm talking about mother but it can be anything, is it ethical*

to eat this chicken or let this chicken live or whatever? I mean, whatever you do, whatever action you take it's questionable, especially in the future when you know the consequences of what you did. But on the spot, what is right, what is wrong? It's very questionable but is there any proper position between acting or not acting, being more in compassion, helping the others or just the wisdom and you think, well, whatever happens happen?

James: *It's always difficult, I don't know what it's like in Switzerland. In France, especially on market day, people park their car anywhere. Pushing onto the side of the road and everywhere. Somebody's got their car parked badly we would say in terms of normal traffic flow. But its market day and the gendarme walks past and doesn't say anything. Never mind. A little child is behind the car and runs up and dies. Then you would say hey, if your car hadn't been parked in this way then this child wouldn't have died. You are culpable for the death of the child. Is that true? Everyone parks their cars in these places. So, again, these multiple factors, and then we want to simplify it by saying that somebody must be responsible, somebody must be held to blame. But the whole system can't be held to blame because it's too complicated. And you can't bring the whole social economic system and the habits of the French village community into the court. You have to bring that one person and the fact that their car was parked illegally.*

Do you know where it was parked illegally?

Yes, I know that everyone does it.

Was it parked illegally or not?

Yes, it was.

So you admit illegally parking your car in a place that blocked the view of the child.

I didn't do that. I just parked my car going to the market, every other car was there.

So suddenly when the factors changes, the shape, the topology of the car park is altered. Nothing has changed but everything has changed. That for me would be the difficulty, trying to work out what is a unitary cause in a field of multiple causations. And, of course we have to hold ourselves responsible. We learn that as a child. Mum says,

I'm tired tidying your room, you have to tidy your room. You've got the toys out you have to put the toys back.

Why should I always have to do it?

I'm your mother not your servant.

It's heard in many, many households. The child is thinking,

But I don't want to do it.

You have to do it.

Don't want to be told I have to do it.

You have to. You have to take responsibility for what you do.

But I was just playing. I didn't take the toys out, I was playing, because I needed more cars I had to get these cars.

That's what it's like in the child's mind.

Now we've got this. Look! we had a big road.

Look at the mess you've made.

I was playing.

That's another ten minutes of my time and I don't have time, you do it.

The child says,

It's not my fault. I didn't make a mess, I was playing.

You have two categories of interpretation that really can't be brought in a good rapprochement. So, who should win? Mum has more power. Child can scream. Mum's tired and says,

oh Jesus! I can't take it. Go out. I'll just do it. I can't bear the screaming and protesting.

You know parents give in a lot to these situations.

So, this is one of the issues when we look at this threefold model, the ground and then the field in its complexity, the individual plant or flower which is me in this moment. I am linked to the field of complexity. So, in the moment you cut me off and I am just this flower. Actually I am a flower because of the field because of where my seed was planted, if its under a tree it will grow this high. Because I am out there, I grow this high. So how I am is dependent on these factors. It's very difficult.

In Tibet as well they had a legal system. They punished people because they did things. They didn't think complex thoughts about them. In English we say, you are held to account. And account means like what the accountant does just tot up the figures; you did this, and this, and this. It's all about the manifest, it's not about the complexity.

The difficulty of ethics

Audience: *And what about the rules given in Buddhism, like not eating animals and stuff like this? So what is the purpose of that?*

James: Yeah, they are good rules. We can say they are good rules. People don't always follow them. I certainly don't always follow them. But they are indications that if you were more thoughtful you would be more careful in your behaviour. That is to say, knowing the consequences of your action, might stop you carrying out your action. So what they are trying to do is take you out of the blinkered position of your self-focused arousal. I want to do it, I'm going to do it, I have to do it. Then you think, *oh! but what about you? Or what about these other people?* Now I have to feel a tension, before in my arousal, I had no tension at all, I was just committed to this uni-directional movement, which is actually quite nice. Now you say, *Oh God now if I do what I want you will be upset.* So now tension comes into me and I have to live with that tension. Impulse? Or some kind of reflection? And that's what we call civilisation where we try to encourage children to manage their own impulses through contextualising the consequences. Well I think that would be absolutely valid. Of course, then what happens is you spend your life struggling, *shall I do it, shall I not do it?* And you multiply more and more mental activity which affects the 'prana' in the body and become a kind of worried good person; never quite free to be spontaneous, never quite alive because of fearing the consequence of your actions. Many good people are good out of fear. Now if you are good out of fear, are you really good? Ethics is a difficult area.

Any other thoughts or feelings from all the things we have looked at?

Co-emergence of non-duality

Audience: (translated from French) *She wanted to come back to what you said yesterday about non-duality being this thin line between existence and non-existence. The view that things don't have inherent self-existence. So this path that things don't have inherent self-existence and still they do exist. How to find a way?*

James: So existence and nonexistence are two polarities. We touched on, every aspect of our life is structured around polarities. So, if I go over to one

wall and I say existence, everything exists. There is something very definite here and I know where I am. Because the more I am in touch with this definite position, it gives me a sense of definition. And if I go over to the other wall of non-existence, the same thing happens. Everything is non-existent is really how it is. So, I am given a shape and a definition through my alignment with that position even if I push against it, it confirms me. But if I come back to the middle position that is neither existing nor non-existing, both existing and non-existing, these are simultaneously true. I don't have anything to push against.

So, my shaping is not going to be given to me by a position. So, I am here and I can't find anything, so I don't have an external reference point, and so I have to be grounded and centred in myself. This is the balance of non-duality. It's not created through pushing on the polarities. So the advantage of being here is that I can move in all kinds of directions. And if I'm on an endpoint, if I have taken a final position I am constrained by my certitude. But there is a not knowing in this, you have to take it as it arises in each moment. I'm not pre-positioned. This is a responsive position. Whereas if I am with a fixed point I am pre-positioned into the activity.

Audience: (translating from French) *She was saying that up until now she was more considering the fact that things do not have an inherent self-existence but now she starts to realise that there was a narrow lane and now she can also take into consideration that things do exist.*

James: So, the simple formulation of that would be not either/or but both/and. It's both non-existing because we can't find anything, and it is existing because it is existing in the sense that it manifests. These are mutually contradictory but not mutually exclusive. And it is the co-emergence of this, the non-duality, the non-splittedness of these that allows us to live with the complexity of the world.

When you go to the extremes you can have definite knowledge. You can follow a right wing political party or a left wing political party, a proposal about how they want France or Switzerland to be. You know where you are. But if you stay open to events then how you feel politically can move according to many different factors. Your thoughts are not formulated by membership of a party. You find yourself in a dynamic changing

relationship with the manifold factors of society. Therefore you have to participate from yourself, no one is telling you what to think or believe. That's what's difficult. That's why most people don't stay in the middle, they go to the extremes. Academic life is full of battles, we say between different camps in linguistic analysis, in modern philosophy and so on, people side with one particular reading or another reading. You go to university in the hope of being able to think and develop your own understanding. But you find yourself being pulled into a particular way of thinking.

So for a while when Jaques Derrida was very popular. In American universities to be in a department of English, you had to be into deconstruction. That became the language. Then after fifteen years of that when everyone has a total headache, then Jaques happily dies and the people are free to have ordinary thoughts. But that's what happens. We are always pulled into formulation. So staying with not knowing. In other language, stay fresh, stay open. Let's see. Because we don't know. It's hubris to say we know what will happen. Extremes are always popular.

So, Mahayana buddhism turns around Madhyamika understanding, the middle way. The philosophical middle way. And the great philosopher of that is Nagarjuna and his great self-positioning was to say *Neti, Neti*, not this, not this. He said, 'if you want to see the truth of things then don't make propositions about them'. All propositions are deceptive. That's a place of not knowing but not a place of uncertainty, these are two different things. There's no need to be anxious in not knowing. Just relax the not knowing. Since knowledge means resting on a concept, all knowledge is a state of dependency. Knowledge proceeds from axioms: something is invented and then taken as intrinsic, and on the basis of that you create your system.

In the meditation we observe how we get pulled into identification with positionings. Our hope and our wish is to open to how we truly are. But like somebody entering a forest, we find that we are encountering positionings which grow rapidly and fill the space of the mind. Beneath the forest is the earth and the earth is willing to let most things grow. But in your mind you have habit formations. Using this analogy, we can say that our tendency is to be full of oak trees, not pine trees. We want to find the earth but instead we encounter a lot of oak trees. However without the Earth you wouldn't have any oak trees. So you get out your machete and decide that you're

going to get rid of all these oak trees and then you'll get to the earth. But your machete is blunt, and the oak tree is pretty hard. So you die in the middle of a forest with a blunt axe.

You can't get rid of propositions. It's not either/or. All propositions are rooted in emptiness. Ignorance is rooted in emptiness. If you stay with the ignorance you have wisdom. Only one ground. There is no proposition-production factory. The communists don't do it, the capitalists don't do it, people from outer space don't do it. It's the mind. And the thing about the mind is that it is unborn and unceasing.

Ego identity is extrinsic

Let's move on with the text. There will be time for other questions later. Maitripa says,

No matter how much you stabilise your mind in a quiet place, if you have not realised this truth you will not be freed from states that are merely circumstantial.

You can do a lot of meditation every day, you can calm your mind down so that very little is occurring and you don't feel much disturbance. This experience is arising due to causes and conditions. It is created, it is artificial. You have constructed this particular quality of experience and from that point of view it's not reliable. So, he is saying that no matter how much of that kind of calming of yourself you do, if you have not realised the truth of the empty ground, the openness of your mind itself then you will not be freed from states that are merely circumstantial.

So, this means, say you start off from a position where you are often very anxious and you hear about mindfulness-based something or other, so you do a bit of mindfulness, and then you start to do some more meditation, you find yourself becoming calmer. You find yourself less worrying about the future and anxious about things from the past. You are becoming more peaceful. This is good. But it's circumstantial due to the circumstances of having found the teaching and doing it, this particular patterning of experiences arises for you. But everything which arises due to a cause will vanish once the causal force is finished because nothing is self-existing. So, as your engagement with the causal factors declines your mind shifts, your mind changes.

There are many people who meditate every day for years and years then they stop, they just stop, they've had enough, they don't do it. People do all sorts of things every day, they go running every day, then they stop. Gone. That's because it was circumstantial. Every day you say, *I am a runner, you buy all your lycra gear. Hi, I see the same people every day, it's amazing, we're so good.* Then you stop. You're not running, you're not a runner. Gone! It was arising due to causes and circumstances. Every positioning of ego identity is like that. It is not intrinsic, it is extrinsic, it is coming as a social formation. So he says that if you do this 'artificial mind manipulation kind' of meditation, eventually it will vanish. In the traditional example they say, *it's like a patch on an old coat.* You sew the patch on but it's not embedded in the weave of the cloth itself, so it can fall off more easily. You have to find the intrinsic. He says,

But if you experience this truth then what could possibly bind you?

When you see that the ground of your mind, the mind itself, is open and empty then you have good days and bad days. You feel happy and light and warm and loving. You feel sad and isolated and hateful. All kinds of experiences continue to arise. You don't block the experience, it is how you manifest, but in terms of the ground of that manifestation, how you are, the stillness the openness, the naked awareness doesn't change. There you have the non-duality of movement and stillness. So then he says whatever arises will not bind you because you're not looking for identity.

Nowadays the culture is absolutely permeated by strange and intense notions of identity. Could be gender identity, sexual identity, racial identity, ethnic identity of all sorts of kinds. People are wanting to establish their felt sense of who they are. From the buddhist point of view identity is something false. It's not genuine, it's a construct.

Awareness is intrinsic. When you lose awareness you find yourself in a world with many, many things, like an infinite buffet bar, and you make your selection and out of that you have your identity. So your identity is a composite, created in time, enduring in time, and will vanish in time. You act as if this is truly me but it's likely to change in the course of your life. So for people of my age, I have had many different identities. Different stages in

my life, doing particular things was exactly who I was. I did them because that was who I was, I don't do them now. So, the ontological aspect of identity, the 'this is me-ness' is linked to the epistemological aspect of identity, that is to say, how I identify these factors and position them into a package. But it looked as if the two were the same.

So when I worked in hospital I was the consultant therapist, I was the top guy. This was my world I was in charge of all these things. I was not just doing things but somehow I had a status or identity that influenced everything else that was going on. But when I left there, I still do therapy, but I don't do it in that way. So that wrapper around my formulation dissolved. And the ways that I could speak in the hospital department I don't speak in other areas of my life. So that was a situationally specific evocation of aspects of my potential. And when these evocative or enticing or developing factors cease to operate, I no longer arise in that pattern, I arise in other patterns, and other patterns. So, identity is always like that. Identity is misleading. That's what he is saying is that you get bound, you get pulled into a limitation because you are looking to be someone.

An identity is an illusion

When you get people described as an ex-footballer what is the meaning of that? Too old to kick the football. Leave football out of your description of yourself. I'm an ex this, an ex that. Ex is exited, it's gone, over. It's a way of trying to hang on to what I was but it's gone. That's what he's saying that as long as you are looking for a home, something to align yourself with, you get pulled into that. Which is why in general Buddhism, you begin by taking refuge. If you take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, that gives you an identity. An identity of, I believe, in the possibility of awakening from confusion and limitation. Now I have a path as something that I can participate in. And you can continue that in this life and next life, in every life, you can keep opening and opening and opening. But I can't continue being a therapist in the national health service. The national health service will probably collapse in Britain after Brexit, there's no money for it. It was a temporary structure. All identities are temporary structures arising due to causes and circumstances.

So then, again it's the middle way, you have to have identity, it is the social calling card but all identity is empty. So I both have an identity and have no identity because identity is an illusion. An illusion doesn't mean something which doesn't exist at all. In the traditional example like a mirage, when you see a mirage, it's undeniable, there is a mirage. When your car arrives there, there is nothing to be found. There and not there. So in your identity going through life, as a mother, as a this, as a that, it is the play of illusion. And if you build your whole house on whatever it is, being a mother, when the kids leave home you're going to be upset, you don't know who you are, completely confused. You are over committed to one formation of identity.

The ground of your being is open and fresh

So, the instruction is always that you live your life in the manner of a dream. It doesn't mean not being present, it means don't take yourself too seriously. Don't take all of these things as if they were truly important. They're there for a while and then they are gone. So, who am I? Well you are the ground, and the clarity and the emergence. The ground you can't catch, the field of experience is always bright and shimmering and always changing, and how you emerge depends on these circumstances and is always changing. So the only stability in your life is your own empty ground which you will never catch but which you are. No phenomena are stable. No movement is stable. Now that should be fairly obvious. It's just kind of, ugh, ugh, like a category contradiction, stable/movement. But we make ourselves out of movement.

So you do something, you're a painter, you paint, that's what you do. Palette, colours, stretch the canvas, now I'm painting. **Painting**, **painting**, now I have the finished painting this painting. I'm a painter, I'm looking for the next canvas. I am not a painter unless I am painting. It's a verb, it's an activity. But then you meet someone you say, *oh I am an artist*. There are lots of people who are artists who can't paint. Painting is an activity. So there we see life is performative and it's only alive when you're performing it. But the deception or the delusion is to try to distil an essence out of the activity. An essence of inner substance, *I am an artist, I am a special kind of person*. You're a painter, let's see your painting, looks like crap to me. You're not a very good painter. And a painter is somebody who does painting. A painter grammatically starts to sound a bit more solid, like a lawyer is somebody

with a law degree who is entitled to do a particular kind of practice. But what they do is 'Lawing'. They engage themselves in the dynamic of interviewing, writing documents, appearing in court, making appeals to the court system and so on. To be a lawyer is a description of permission to enter into pathways of activity. But when you call it a lawyer you extrapolate illusory essence of identity which has some social status, and you form yourself inside this illusory package because if you are a lawyer with no work, a non-lawing lawyer is a pretty sad kind of person. A non-dentisting dentist is also pretty sad. You know, we are performative creatures so what we call identity is actually performativity. There is no essence distilled from it. There is no ontological gain.

So that's really what he's saying here that when you recognise that, there is no binding. Because once you become something, then that's you, you're fixed in that. But we are not fixed. The potential of the ground is always moving and changing. This is why we are very fortunate people, we can alter how we manifest in the world in many different ways.

But once someone catches you with a label, and they pin that on you, it's very dangerous. It is dangerous just as it is limited but it's also dangerous because people think they've got to you. If you want to be got because you feel lonely and lost inside then you play into that. For example, say you're a disturbed teenager and you're not doing too well at school, and your parents are like shit, you don't like anything, and you don't care about anything, you're very, very liable to be recruited into a gang. Because now you're going to have a sangha, you'll have people you can hang out with. People like you, they validate you, they say, *'hey you're pretty good at shoplifting. Get me 100 cigarettes.'* 'Ok'. Now are you get more and more into the gang, it's obvious you're a gang member. *Can I have a special gang tattoo.* I'm serious, all over the world, in South America, North America, in Britain kids are doing that because they're looking for identity. They didn't get it from their parents or their school or their culture. *Who am I?* It all goes up to the surface, depends on your haircut, it depends on your tattoo. Imagine if the meaning of your life is your haircut? Unbelievably shallow and empty. And so you get more intense emotion in these situations. Whereas if you see that the ground of your being is open and fresh, and the vitality of the world is your own mind. That's very, very different. So that's what he means by not being bound.

The mind is perfect in its emptiness

When you abide unwaveringly in this openness there is no need of constructed meditations for your body and voice.

It means the emptiness of the mind itself is enough. It doesn't require anything to be done to it. Our body needs maintenance, we need food and rest and so on. Our voice needs also some way of communicating to come into its vitality, but the mind doesn't need anything. The mind as it is when we just relax and open, awareness is there by itself. Unborn, unchanging. Then you really rest. You don't need to improve it, how would you improve a mirror? The mirror is empty. If you put oil on the surface it wouldn't improve it. If you put gold around it it wouldn't improve it. If you scratched the glass it wouldn't improve it. The mirror is what it is. It is perfect in its emptiness.

The mind is perfect in its emptiness. You can't improve emptiness. You decide that you want to improve the sky, so you put up big balloons. They are in the sky, they're not touching the sky, they're not harming the sky, they're not changing the sky. The mind is not improved and it's not harmed. The good actions of the Buddha doesn't improve the mind, the bad actions of sentient beings don't harm the mind. When you realise that then you have intrinsic freedom because our mind is always pure. So then you can be in all kinds of situations with all kinds of movement moving through the mind, but because you rest in awareness, the movement can arise. Now the movement is not coming from somewhere else.

It's like, the example we looked at before, there is the sun in the sky and the brightness of the sun is the universal illumination. And from the sun these rays come and when they strike our body we feel warm, we are impacted by that. So the Sun is there and the rays come out. Modern science would say that sun is burning itself up and after so many trillions of years it will vanish. Tibetans are not doing that, this is a naturalistic analogy. They think that sun is always there, the sun is just the sun. So if we stay with their cultural metaphor, the sun doesn't change but the rays are ceaselessly changing.

So there you have the image of the stillness and the movement. The movement is the energy arising. In Tibetan it's called *Rig-Pai Tsal*. *Tsal*

means movement that comes out, it's bit like prana, it's just arising out of the emptiness. And it's not depleting the emptiness, there is nothing to deplete in emptiness. So although we say void, it's a plenum void. The void is always full and this fullness is in display. So there is nobody doing it. This comes back to the question of agency. When you are in touch with the ground, the ground is the author of everything. Everything moves through the ground and we the flowers, we are the expression of the energy. We don't have our own personal ground. There isn't a James inside me doing James-ness. James is a name that we apply to this particular flowering of the richness of the field embedded in the ground. So there is agency but it's not a personal agency. That doesn't mean that I'm some kind of weird robot and I'm following the master ship somewhere else.

Seeing everyone as an end in themselves and not as a means to an end

Choices arise in the emergence. So the flower is showing itself according to the weather. If the flowers had been out in the very heavy rain this morning half the petals might have been knocked off. So, our emergence is of course influenced by these factors but it's ground is ever open. So new flowers, new flowerings, new formations can arise if you stay with the ground.

So that's the real point he's making here that if you get into trying to improve the flowers then you have subject/object interaction, you have an agenda, the flower then becomes a means to an end. It ceases to be an end in itself. In European philosophy a big alarm bells starts to ring because, as Immanuel Kant pointed out, deep ethics, the real respect for other people is that they are an end in themselves. They are not a means to an end. Once you turn other people into a means to an end you can enslave them, you can exploit them, you put them in a zero hours contract, you get them to work for these modern companies and you treat them like shit. Because they are the way you generate your profit and that is all you are interested in. But if you see people as an end in themselves and you open to them and appreciate their qualities, it's non-utilitarian, I am not utilising you, I'm not using you, I am appreciating you.

In the Buddhist system this level of connectivity is called the 'Sambhogakaya'. It means the aspect of the Buddha which is about enjoyment. Because when you see everyone as an end in themselves you enjoy them. Everyone is valid just as they are. You see people walking by with the dogs, tiny, titchy little dogs, and big, big hunting dogs. Wow! See the birds in the sky, the seagulls, the crows, the sparrows, the swifts. Wow! Everything is as it is. The snails, the slugs, the mosquitoes doing what they do, bopping about, that's an end in itself. So what is it? It's this! What shall we do with it? Love it. Appreciate it. Honour it, paint it, sing a song about it, do a dance for it. That's what it is. That's very different from me pulling you into my frame of reference.

When you see something as an end in itself, you go to it, and you open to it. It is how it is. It's not violent. But if something is a means to an end, it's always moving in the direction of violence because *you are a means to fulfilling my ends. You don't have any ends except to be compliant with my ends, and I'm going to force that because I have policeman or I can push you out of your house, I could pay you no money, you could starve in the gutter.* There are so many ways of coercing people, to submit to being a means of the fulfilment of someone else's end. These companies, these big international companies do this all the time.

So, compassion or you could say Psychotherapy, any kind of therapy is about respect for the unique specificity of this person as they are in this moment with their health, with their connectivity and so on. It's always directed to the phenomena in themselves. So, from that point of view, meditation is the means to achieve what Husserl tried to achieve by logic. He was saying you should bracket off assumptions, you should try to allow the things themselves to reveal. So don't project your assumptions onto them. But he's doing that by mental hygiene, by trying to catch his thoughts in the moment of their arising and bracket them off, doing this epoché. But it's impossible to do that, which he found out, his project collapsed.

Whereas in meditation you can see that because you see the moment of the arising of the formation that would grasp hold of the phenomena and you see it vanish. So all these imprisoning methods for catching other people vanish. They just dissolve. And in that vanishing, there is more seeing. This is called the natural light of the mind. This is the intrinsic clarity

which is revealed when you stop projecting your thoughts and interpretations onto situations. And this is, from the buddhist point of view, is the fulfilment of ethics that by opening to your emptiness, I open to your light and I have nothing to do with it. You're not a thing that I can manipulate. I can't catch you and bend you to my purposes because I'm just appreciating you.

It's good. It's really nice isn't it? It feels very different you know when we all had horrible bosses who treated us as a thing, and we know what that's like. That we're just an extension of their will to power. You are annihilated. You become like the wallpaper. And then you have people who see you and who appreciate you, and then, oh, it becomes safe to show more of yourself. That's the most wonderful thing, I mean that's the gift of therapy with hurt children. They've got so used to hiding and keeping everything inside and when they start to realise it might be safe, they have this flowering of all these qualities. They come alive. It's amazing. It was always there. But if they didn't have that reception as they are, they would be a nasty piece of work, getting in troubles, telling the police to piss off and so on.

So this is really how we might see meditation as a supporting activity in the world, not as some preparation that you have to remember to apply. So if you just loose, you see so much more. And now I see that it is lunchtime!

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Sunday Session Three

How things arise: Co-emergence

If you're building a house, the first thing is always the foundation and the foundation has to be prepared in a way that will take the weight of everything else. So when we began, we were looking at a little bit at the base of the source, the ground. And the quality of the ground determines what it can carry. The ground is empty that is to say, you can't find a particular thing in it. It's described as having five qualities. It's uncompounded, it's not made by putting things together itself, it's self-

originating; It doesn't have a cause outside itself. It's infinite. It doesn't have any limit or boundary. Moreover, there's nothing outside it. Therefore, it is the only source, if there was something outside, it could also be creating things. But there is just everything has just the same source. It cannot be accurately described in language. So whatever we say is a gesture towards it, but it never quite arrives. And it stands outside the categories of samsara and nirvana or limitation and freedom from limitation. This is the foundation out of which we are emerging. And because it's unborn and ungraspable, what arises arises and then slips back into it.

Just as when a wave arises in the ocean, the ocean is not like a cement platform that could support a wave. The wave is just water. And so the wave goes up because of the propulsive force of the vibration going through it and then gravity brings it back down again. And then another propulsive movement and a wave comes up and then it starts to subside. So the water of the wave sinks back into the ocean because a) the ocean has got no power to support something of substance and b) the wave is not other than the ocean. So in the same way, when the thought, the feeling, the sensation, whatever arises is not different from its own ground. It is how the ground shows itself.

Now, with the ocean, it's a bit easier because you catch a bit of water from the wave and you look at it and then you stick your hand under the sea and you pull up and then you say, *hey! its a same kind of stuff that's manifestly aligned*. The issue with our situation is the diversity of the appearances, the experiences that arise for us, different kinds of feelings and so on. And then this ground or this openness of our mind, which doesn't have any qualities at all. So this looks more like a contradiction. That seems to be something here, but there's nothing supporting it.

How could something come out of nothing? That's because what we take to be somethingness, we immediately impute with autonomy, separate agency identity, inherent existence. This is what we put into the arising object. Now in this room, there is nothing with inherent existence. Everything is put together. The bits of wood on the floor, the way the walls are made, the central heating system, the lights, everything is created by the putting together the juxtaposition of things and merging together,

putting the sand and the cement together to make the composition for the walls and so on.

There's nothing self-existing here. Everything is arising from causes. These causes are like the pulsation that flows through the ocean, causing the waves to arise, these are energetic movements. But what is it that is showing different forms according to these pulsations, its emptiness itself. Nothing in this room exists in and of itself. Go outside, nothing exists in and of itself. You can say, *Oh, but look at this Big Mount Blanc*. Mount Blanc is sitting on the land. If there was no earth on the Mount Blanc, it would go right through and come out in Australia. So it's sitting on something. Everything is sitting on something. That's somethingness is not an optional extra. It is the basis of whatever is arising.

So we see a car, but you don't see a car. You see a car on the road. Without a road, it wouldn't have the car. So the car is on the road. The road is on the earth. The Earth is on the rocks underneath and so on. Everything is contextualised. We make the big mistake of putting the context of something secondary or additional but the context is the field within which there is an emergency. If you didn't have roads, you wouldn't have nearly so many cars because if you had just very bad, bumpy surfaces, lots of cars wouldn't operate. So contextualisation or co-emergence or mutually dependent arising, this is how things arise. So we bring that back to ourselves.

One undivided field: It all comes at once

In the openness of my awareness, I become aware of different sensations in the body at the moment I'm talking so I feel some sensation in my throat. I hear the sound that's coming out of my mouth. I look around, I see different people and so on. All of this is arising because of the capacity of the mind to reveal. So the illuminating power of awareness allows the showing of these transient temporary appearances which have no ground of their own, which is why they are always vanishing. So this is our real situation.

Again and again, if this is not clear for you, you have to look. Maybe you go and meet a friend and you chat for a while and they're interested in you and maybe you were at school together and you talk and you have a sense that

they know you. So how is that 'knowing you' revealed to you? Because if they know you, the implication of that is that you are somebody who can be known. So how do they know you, *oh! they know this and this and this about me. This how my mother knows me. This is how my children know me. This is how my lover knows me.* Maybe they know different aspects. So this person has a partial formation organised around aspects of me, which for the purposes of our conversation, I take to be the whole of me. Does that make sense? I don't inform them well, *you know, you only know me playing football together but let me tell you about last night in bed. It was pretty good.* Generally, we don't say things like that. We just talk about football with the football people. And you talk about if you talk at all about it, about sex, with your partner or whatever. So different aspects are revealed in different places.

Even if all of these people were to get together and give their version of you, there would still be bits missing. That is because we are non-summative. You cannot sum up a person. Summation never arrives at infinity in the ground of our being is infinite. There is no limit to us. Now clearly, you look at your body and think, *hey, this is a bit inflated, a bit narcissistic to say, oh, you are infinite.* But that's if, if you say, *well, this is me, this is my domain, this body is the extent of me.* But when you're sitting in this room, the extent of you is everything you see. This is your world. This is your experience. You can conceptualise it. I'm in here looking out there at these things, but actually simultaneously the sensation on the soles of my feet on the wood and the sensation evoked by seeing the angle of the tree at the back of the room arise simultaneously. Both/ and. There's both what arises here which I can take to be me or inside me and there're your faces, your shapes, the tree, the clock, the piles of wood and so on. It all comes at once.

When I think about it I chop it up in pieces and then I put name on theses pieces and then I can move them around developing my narrative. But actually in the moment of their manifestation, it all come at once. This is me. In that sense, 'you' are 'me', not 'you for you' but 'you for me' is 'me'. Because when I look at you, the 'you' that I get is 'me' that is 'my you', it's not 'your you'. I have no idea about what is 'your you', keep that secret. But 'my you' is 'my you'.

When you walk down the street, you have your Geneva, your street, you turn left, you go to a side street, my buildings... the people who live in the buildings have a different experiences. You can relativise that *oh yeah but that's just my experience, they live there they know it better than me*. When you do that you shrink yourself into somebody who is thinking about it but it's not true because when you look down the street everything comes at once. This revelation will never be repeated again. Come back tomorrow, the angle of the sun has shifted slightly, it's a Monday, there is no traffic on the streets and so on. This is an unrepeatable moment, a moment of what? You can say it's a moment of 'me' or a moment of 'you', it's a moment of 'us'. So instead of having self and other, the 'you for me' and the 'me for me' meet together as us. The building as revealed to me and me walking in the street arise together as 'us'. This is the experience available. So this is a very big shift from the division of subject and object. Subjects self inside, world outside. This is saying if you don't interpret what you find then it all arises as one. One undivided field. Inside that undivided field there is diversity but the field is the same.

Just as if you go to the theatre, may be it's a ballet performance and they have the stars and they have called the ballet, may be at one time there are 40 people dancing on the stage. All of these people are on the stage, there is the same stage and all these people on it, so there is a diversity of movement but it's one ballet. It's one event arising together.

You walk down the street, many cars, people with dogs, people in a hurry, people carry bags, people singing, everything comes at once. Ceaselessly, endlessly everything comes at once. So if you stay open this is what you experience. You are moving inside a field of unfolding light. You can of course think about it, but the thought is inside the movement of the light. The thought is a form of the light, the feeling is a form of the light.

Thoughts give limited definitions and conclusions

The shaping of the world is moving according to mood and event. But it doesn't cut it into pieces, that is to say there is no fragmentation. There has been no primal trauma but the diversity is incoherent for the ego that wants to apprehend it. There is so much going on so many different things, there is no meaningful way of grasping it all at once.

You might say, *whoa Geneva is like this*. But that doesn't take you anywhere, it takes you away from the event. The richness and the complexity is here, it is held without effort by awareness, you have already received it. You walk along to the river, you go onto the bridge, you look down the water is flowing, each movement of the water is yours, in that moment it's yours. This is your life, but you think, *oh but I am just looking at the river*. You just cut yourself out of your own existence by thinking, *I am just one person, someone else would see it differently*. It's just how you shrink yourself. You stay open, you look at movement of the river, the water, rippling and moving, the birds are flying. Nobody is looking, it is revealed. When you locate the arising experiences, something happening to you, you have subject object split. *I'm on the bridge, I'm seeing the water, what is arising is, I'm holding onto the metal bar I feel that. I feel the pressure of my feet, or my little rubber sandals, I feel the angle of my back because I'm leaning forward a bit. I see the water, I see the birds, I hear the traffic behind me*. It's all at once. There is too much detail to work out in a logical way but it's already been received.

So the receptivity of awareness is prior to identification of what entities are, how they function, whether we take them to be good or bad and so on. So this is the basis of practice, just to stay open and when a thought arises, *yeah but I didn't make the river, I can't say it's my river, I am gonna be on an airplane, I'm not gonna be here, how can this be my river*. You listen to yourself, you hear how stupid is this. This is a flow of thoughts. And if I follow the logic of the thought, it tells me that I am small and separate, the thought that tells me that has already left. It's gone. That thought is like a police informer, they say little quiet word to the policeman, the policeman goes to the house and arrest the person. Now you are locked in your own conceptual diminishment. You put yourself in a box. Who was the informer? She was lying. You shrunk yourself, that's the movement of thought in the mind.

If you are just on the bridge, *ah I wish I lived here*, its a thought. This river was here before I was born. It's a thought. Thoughts of the past, thoughts of the future, thoughts of somewhere else. If you go the thought for meaning, it will give you the kind of meaning that thoughts can give. If you milk a cow you get milk, if you milk a bull you get semen. Bulls don't give milk which is

obvious. So if you go to a thought, thoughts will give you what thoughts give you which is limited definitions, conclusions. So you rely on the thoughts and it concludes, it comes into a limitation. Now you have propositions and you start stacking your propositions on top of each other and you build a picture, its a lot of work, and it crumbles, it always crumbles.

So if you just stay with the river without thinking about it, the river and you are non-dual, it doesn't mean that you turn into water, the water doesn't leap up and drown you; you and the water are non dual that there is no boundary between you and the water. You receive it without any immigration police. The river doesn't need a passport to come into you. You don't need an import license to look at the river and receive the river. In fact your conceptualisation operates like border control, it's organising how much of this can I have. You just relax and it's all there. So this is the limit of language, I have described this now for about 20 times in different ways, you have to do it yourself. Only through the practice does it become clear. It's beyond concept.

Non-interference allows the clarity of mind to show

So then he says,

whether or not you are in what is called profound balance (mNyam-bZhag)

This is a term used for the most uncontrived open meditation. So whether or not you are settled in this wonderful meditative experience or not, there is no need for contrived meditation involving antidotes. Without attempting to accomplish anything at all, whatever arises will be seen to be devoid of an inherent self-existence. Again this is an encouragement for us not to indulge in unnecessary activity.

When the confused intellect arouse, we can speculate and speculate and speculate. The internet is awash with conspiracy theories endlessly about all kind of events that have happened. This is what people can imagine, *who might have done this and why and how and what*, they think of its relevance and reconstitute it in different patterns. This is our capacity but if the capacity is used in the direction of stupidity, you certainly be able to imagine many things which are false. So we have this big scare now, people

imagine that vaccinating children is going to damage the children. There are many kinds of false imaginations which are run by companies in order to increase their profits and so on but we need to look at our own minds.

If you are not relaxed and open, you are caught up in yourself, not quite sure why you are here and what's this all about, a bit of confusion around, he says that whether or not your mind is relaxed and open, you don't worry about that. There is no need for contrived meditation involving antidotes. So you are sitting here and you're confused. First thing is you don't want to be confused, second thing is you don't like being confused. Thirdly, it would have been better if you weren't confused. Fourth, you are empowered to stop yourself from being confused, so now you try to change your confusion into clarity. You spend a lot of time doing this, this is a modern project of ever increasing neo-pseudo scientific knowledge.

But the traditional example says, if you take a piece of coal and you wash that piece of coal everyday for a year, it wouldn't turn white because the coal is coal and it's black, it has if you like, the nature of coal. So if you are feeling dull and confused, no matter what you do with this dull and confusion, it wouldn't become bright. In English, we say you can't make a silk purse out of a cow's ear. If you have a cow's ear or pig's ear, you can boil it and make a soup. Poor people used to eat that kind of thing a lot. But you don't make a silk purse, they are different categories. You are in the category of confusion if you think it was possible. So you can't turn ignorance into enlightenment.

So this is very important, because many spiritual schools attempt to do just that, they take the dull stupid bit and polish it, wash it and make it shiny. But it is impossible, if it's stupid, it's stupid. You don't have to be stupid, you don't have to identify with the stupid thought in your mind. As soon as you allow the stupid thoughts to arise and pass, who is stupid? But if you catch the thought and you say, *oh James is going on and on about all these things, when I get home, I'm going to get all these buddhist books and I'm gonna sit down and I'm gonna have a reading program because I need to find out all about this.* That's one way to pass your time. But all that will do is to give you more thoughts about buddhism and more thoughts about yourself. And the house that you can build with thoughts, these are houses that will crumble and collapse.

Now if you rented a room in a house, and it was built on a bad foundation and it started to crumble, you can sue the landlord, you might get punitive damages. But when you have build the house yourself which court will you go to to sue yourself for the bad residence that you yourself have created for yourself. So in this early book of the Buddha, the Dharmapada, there is a one little verse. It says the maker of the house is gone, the roof is collapsed, the beams are collapsed, I will build no more houses. So this is exactly what he is saying. You take these thoughts and you build a picture of yourself, *I don't know how to meditate, I don't understand anything*, this is a construct. If you don't do that construction, heavy thoughts, despairing thoughts, confused thoughts arise and they pass. Don't make the transient the basis of your existence.

So that is what he is saying here, if you say this is bad and now I want to use an antidote to clean this, by the time you get the antidote this is gone. So now what you're going to clean are your memories. You are now washing in the past. Not possible, it's gone. Coal doesn't become chalk, chalk doesn't become coal, it is what it is. At this moment, the mind is dull and stupid, you have not always been dull and stupid, you will not always be dull and stupid, so don't paralyse yourself by merging into the thought by saying, *oh my God that's the truth about me*. Relax and observe the patterning of dull stupidity. Then you might feel a bit excited, you might feel a bit expansive. Whatever is arising allow it to be there and let it pass. Non-interference allows the clarity of mind to show. So again it's this paradox, the less you do the more you see. Now this is absolutely contrary to our experience.

So now we find that before petrol car were thought to be good, then they said, *no, diesel cars are good*. Now they say, *diesel cars are very very dirty, so many particulates, therefore we need to have electric cars*. Electric cars will be another kind of ecological disaster for all kinds of reasons. Who is enthusiastic to build the electric cars to save the planet, the people who are building diesel cars now. If they sold you 'Shite' (a particular car brand) and lie to you about their production as many German car companies did, why would you believe that these people have suddenly become honest.

They say, *oh, when we made the diesel car, our name was sold, but here on the road to Damascus we are pole, poles electric cars, this is a new*

revelation, the light of the lord shall shine on you. They are bunch of lying cheaters, they want your money. These are Monsanto, we know this. We know when these big companies cheat us, and when we get very angry, then you look at yourself, nobody cheats you more than you. I am a bad person just look at my thought. Which thought? It's gone. You say, *no! but if you had seen what I was thinking last night, oh my God!* It's not last night anymore, it's gone. Impermanence is the best bath available, impermanence is the permanent shower. Washing, washing, washing.

Allow the form of things as they are

So that is what this sentence we have already looked at it briefly.

Without attempting to accomplish anything at all, whatever arises will be seen to be devoid of inherent self-existence.

When you want to create something, you reify, you give a reality to what you are building on. You have an intention towards it which projects value and meaning into this phenomenon and you solidify the situation. So say I decide that I have had enough of this life, it's too difficult family life is too difficult, I am getting old, I going to get sick, I think I am gonna kill myself. So then I have to think how will I do that, jump from the building, jump in the river, cut my wrists, take some poison, what will I do? Now I am thinking about killing myself, so that's what he is prescribing here. He says without attempting accomplish anything at all. But I want to kill myself. No, you don't have to do that. Don't try to kill yourself, don't try to be happy, don't plan happy holidays, don't do anything. Nothing at all, don't do anything. If you don't do anything, whatever arises will be seen to be devoid of inherent existence.

So you decide to go for a run in the country, you want some fresh air, it's a beautiful day and you are quite good at running. So you are starting and maybe you are going 10-12 kilometres an hour, it's a good pace you can keep it up. You are running, running and running. Your focus is on running, you can't see the trees and the grass but you are going very fast. After a while you get tired, you slow down your fast walking. So now you may be going 6 km an hour. Oh! I see a bit more, now you have got a little pain in your back, maybe 2 km an hour, you can see a bit more. Now you are out of

breath, you sit down and you see there are some wild flowers in the field. You see them quite clearly. All the time you were running the fields were full of wild flowers but when you were running fast you didn't see them. So this is all he is saying here.

If your mind is moving fast with your plans and your intentions, you wouldn't see everything else, you will be preoccupied. You will be focused on a very limited arena of what is actually happening. So the key thing is always to go slowly, when you go slowly you see more; when you go quickly you see less.

Of course, when you see more, you get paralysed. Very often students do this, they go to the library and they collect a lot of information. And they have to write their essays may be 10000 words, now they have a lot of information and 10000 words. But it's a lot of work to bring it together. So you have to hand in your essay in a week's time. Suddenly the adrenaline is running through your body, you're staying awake till 2'O clock in the morning and you are writing and writing. Because it was too much. Now you simplify the task through fear and horror. That's why in Buddhism they say you should meditate on old age and death. Fear and horror will focus your mind. But we don't want to go in that direction. We want to stay open to everything but we are not writing an essay, we are not formulating. We are allowing the form of things to be as they are. This is the big difference.

So that's why he is saying when you don't seek to accomplish anything, when you are not in active involvement whatever arises will be devoid of inherent existence because when you look at it without doing anything, it is as it is. You are no longer interpreting modifying, accommodating moulding. And it is what it is. And what it is is empty. So then you start to hear this truth that you see in so many of the text, and in so many of the lineage teachings, everything is pure from the very beginning. If its pure, why would you clean it, it doesn't need improving. So when you feel depressed, when you feel lonely and anxious, don't do anything. Sit with that, and it vanishes. All mental states are self-liberating. If they are self-liberating, you don't need to liberate them. If you try to liberate something that's self-liberating, you are unnecessarily active and its would not help the self-liberation.

This is very basic. So whenever you are sitting in meditation and you start to get involved with the thoughts and enter in judgement around the thought, you have to remember that this is unnecessary activity. This is obsessional activity. Generally speaking people have different notions about domestic cleanliness. Some people like to do a lot of domestic cleaning, other people like very little domestic cleaning. However much you clean there will always be some dirt, so your house will always be relatively dirty. And for some of us, 99 percent dirt is okay. For other people 1 percent dirt is too much. Tidiness can be privileged or not privileged. It depends on whether you think something must be done. This is terrible, I can't live in a house like this. Why not? It's just dirty.

My mother kept a very clean tidy house. But when I went to live in India and I had no money and I was living in a very very dirty room, then I became very very used of living in dirty rooms. Living on the old mattresses that somebody had given me that were not at all clean, not very nice, sometimes they had lice in them, and its just like that, that's how it is, it's poor and its like this. You breathe in and out and one day follows another. And you have a poor dirty life. That's your life. That's how poor people live. You look at others like the rikshaw-wala (cycle-peddler), the people who got tea shop at the side of road, they have got a dirty blanket, that's a life. That's a dirty life. Dirty is secondary to life. It's their life, there is nothing wrong with it. Modernist people come and give them a bath and new toilets etc. For thousands of people, for years, people have been shitting at the banks of the river Ganges, now they have a toilet and where does the toilet flush into – the river Ganges. We are caca in private! In the old days, in villages everyone went out early in the morning all together, you can see 20, 30, 40 people, all having shit at the same time and they are chatting to each other. Now you go into your own dirty little cubicle and do your poop. Which is better? Is this modern development? It's anti social. Lonely isolated, schizoid pooping. Something must be done. But why?

So take this into the meditation, you sit, you relax, you breathe out, the show begins. Why you are leaning forward? Why you are getting involved? Show goes on. You find yourself involved, you didn't intend to get involved. You get carried away by the thoughts. As you as you recognise that relax. And the more you do that, the easier it gets to relax out of the involvement. And then because you are spending more time relax and open, you get less

involved. And after sometime you're hardly involved at all. The involvement was always artificial, the relaxation is how it is.

Don't merge with the thoughts

But when you are a beginner, the relaxation is something you are trying to do, and the distraction and involvement into the thought seems completely natural because that's what is always happening. So there is always a transition point in the middle where you really realise I am distracted because I give myself to do it. *This is volitional, I do it. Why am I doing it? Where doesn't it take me. I don't have much time in my day for meditation and I have spent half an hour wandering around in the labyrinth of thoughts. Why? Because I gave myself into it. Why? I wasn't relaxed.* So when you realise that before you sit, you can do some stretching exercise, open up your diaphragm in particular, for some people it helps to put some music and dance a little bit, do some basic yoga stretches, pranayama, there are all kind of things that you can do to relax. And people already often have methods which is why I don't teach any of these, you can learn them anywhere.

But you still realise, *oh I have stored up a lot of tension inside myself, my 'nadis' are knotted, the 'prana' is not flowing very easily,* so you can dissolve this through physical yoga, you can also do it directly through the mind. The main things is to realise, as long as I am tight, I am more likely to vibrate. Just as if you take the blade of a saw, it tangs very easily because the tension in the steel lets it vibrates more. The same happens to us when we are distorted inside and things get us going, we start to vibrate.

When you're feeling tensed and you walk down the street, there's an arousal that goes with it. So we are often carrying a lot of that. Relax into the out breath and just observe nothing to be done. Where is the enemy? I am aroused for doing something- fight or flight, what am I going to do. Where is the enemy? There is no enemy, its actually relaxed and open. Oh! I have a habit of tension and the tension feels like me. And the reason I don't release the tension because I wouldn't recognise myself if I wasn't tensed. So then we realise this is what we mean by our energetic body. That the patterning of our tense restricted tendency towards engagement

involvement, this is operating out side of my conscious sense of self, I am predisposed energetically.

We talk of body, speech and mind, this is speech element which is linked with breath and tension which is tight. So you have to relax the body and you have to relax the breath and you relax the mind. The mind itself is always relaxed but the thoughts and feelings moving through it are often a little bit vibratory. We all have incidents in our lives which upset us when we remember them. We remember some difficult moments, some bad event in a relationship, or children getting into a trouble. We may describe the feeling as shame or guilt but whatever we call the feeling, it's a retraction; we can't stay open to it.

So aspects of my life feel toxic to me how can I be me in the presence of my life because there are things in my life I'd rather forget, that I don't want to be there. I would rather be a better person, a different kind of person. There you see fundamental duality: as if you had a choice, you are what you are, you are how you are. If you stay with it, if you have a tendency of jealousy or anger or greed, stay with it.

You don't have to be in a profound meditation. Maybe you are just standing at the bus stop and somebody pushes ahead of you. You feel irritated. Just be with the irritation. Relax in the out breath! Now you are standing and this other person is sitting down. Wonderful! You are fully irritated. Wow! There it goes. Because you have given yourself to the irritation, the irritation didn't catch you. If it catches you, you are in danger of acting it out but you give yourself to it: *I am irritated and I love being irritated, I am so fascinated by being irritated in my head, in my neck, in my belly, in my legs.* What is irritation? What is sadness? Somebody gets promoted at work ahead of you, and you know they are an asshole, you feel your boss is stupid. These are wonderful experiences because you stay with them, then you see *oh! I am suffused with this feeling.*

So one of the images that is used in Dzogchen, if you take a crystal ball, and you put it on a red cloth, it looks a little bit red. Then you take it off and put it on a blue cloth and it looks a little bit blue. The ball was neither red nor blue. It was always translucent. This is like us.

You are standing in a tram, and you are irritated, you are like a crystal ball you are full of irritation. You are irritated only if you merge into it. The crystal ball is clear and slightly blue, clear and slightly red. So then a friend gets on the tram, you start chatting and you feel happy now happiness is suffusing you, before irritation was suffusing you. Then you realise *oh I am just this, filling and emptying*. So going back to the issue about truly existing or not existing, am I happy? Yes I am happy and empty. Am I irritated? Yes irritated and empty. The irritation is filling me but I am not fundamentally irritated, that's the difference between non duality and the tissue. When you blow your nose into the tissue, the stuff from your nose goes into the paper, that's what it's made for, it's very absorbent and it's difficult to re-use it because you don't want to clean it and you can't wash it as it falls apart under the tap. This is what it's like to be absorbent, the ego is absorbent. Awareness is like the crystal ball. The same thing is arising in the same thing 'irritation' but if I am caught by the irritation, I am irritated! or I am full of irritation.

Non-duality: The non-separation of openness and movement

And so you have the relaxation and the openness and the irritated feeling and they are not in opposition. So that's subtle but available all the time. And that's our practice that not falling into what is occurring and not trying to step back and defend ourselves from it but just being open to it. Let it happen. And of course the traffic warden here is your sense that I don't want to be like that. Stop that, don't be like that. Be like this. So you want to have selectivity, you want to make yourself of how you like yourself to be. It's not possible. Life's arising through us, events touch us, we become unhappy and disturbed. It's like that.

A friend of mine had been a little bit ill and I wrote him an email saying I was thinking about him and I remembered things we had done in India. Then he sent me back a nice email saying he remembered things too, and described some of them, and then he said now he is in the middle of his chemotherapy. I said, *Fuck! I didn't know you had cancer! I thought they were just doing tests*. So my mood reading his memory of our being together was quite happy and then I come to this sentence that 'I am in the middle of a chemotherapy' and then it's like a switch turning. Shit! He could die, it's this serious kind of cancer. We know this in ourselves that we flip through moments from one to another to another.

When I was happy, it's not really happy, it's happy due to. It's happy and empty. Then it's sad, really sad, sad and empty. This is called non duality, you are not blocking life experience otherwise how could you have compassion, if you were some kind of perfect saviour, some angel come down from heaven, you wouldn't have any empathetic attunement. It's because we get hurt and wounded, we can resonate with other people's troubles. But if you resonate too much then you get enmeshed, it wouldn't help. If you protect yourself too much, you can't get close. So we're always adjusting things on that tipping balancing point. Then he says,

All appearances are self-liberating in this infinite hospitality (Chhos-dByings)

That means in the openness of the mind everything arises and passes.

and all thoughts are self-liberated in and as the great original knowing.

The great original knowing means the knowing that knows the origin or the ground or the source that knows emptiness. So when you see the emptiness of phenomenon, that allows them to go free. So you are irritated, you experience the irritation and you know that its dynamic arising moving through you and it's devoid of substance like a rainbow. And then this gives rise to wisdom because you see anger is empty, jealousy is empty, pride is empty, depression is empty, murderous rage is empty. Everything is empty. And this is the best protection against being harmful to other people. Not trying artificially to be good but to see the empty nature of all that arises.

This is the non-dual perfect evenness of the intrinsic mode, means how the mind actually is from the very beginning, is equally balanced in the non-duality, the non separation of openness and movement. The never changing openness and the ever changing movement like the flow of a great river, true illumination will be with you wherever you stay. This is the presence of uninterrupted buddhahood, the great happiness free of all samsaric objects.

See if you have any questions related to this particularly in relation to your own practice and your own life because practice doesn't mean just sitting on the meditation cushion. It means interacting with family, be at work, every situation is practice. We are practicing being present in the face of

our tendency to avoid. We turn away, we turn into interpretation. To come back to being present and open. Because its profoundly paradoxical to say the best defence is to be completely open. It sounds stupid. Best defence is to get an army, and guns and avoid being attacked. But this is to say if you are open, you will always find the enemy to be empty. If you turn away, you will imagine, the enemy is truly real and dangerous and wants to get you. So you frighten yourself because you run away before you had a chance to see that the thought is vanishing. That's why he is saying don't do artificial meditation, don't apply antidotes, don't try to change it. Because your movement will stop you from seeing that the thought has gone. Just relax, you don't have to hold yourself in place and let it come and it will always go. So see if there are any thoughts or questions.

Comparing mahamudra and zen meditation

Audience: What is the difference between this and Zazen meditation?

James: Not very much. Probably the main thing will be the mood. In traditional Japanese monasteries, people are very serious and they are trying very hard and in this, he never says anywhere in this that try hard. He doesn't say, 'do your best'. This is always expected of you that you do try to do your best. It's not written by your papa. He is saying it is doing itself, he is saying don't do your best. Don't try hard. Don't try.

Zen Buddhism is full of trying. It's full of effort. Success and failure is everywhere, you have to go in to see the master and the master sits there and you have to say something and you don't know what to say. Then you say something and he laughs at you. You say, *I don't understand at all (with crying sound)!!!* And the master says, *10 more years in front of the wall.*

He is not saying that at all, he says whether or not you are in what is called as profound balance, whether or not you are in open meditation, whether or not you are satori or not, there is no need for contrived meditation involving antidotes. He says that you don't need to do that because if you are trying, your own efforts will make you very rigid.

It's not by accident that many of the zen schools were implicated in the militaristic Japanese turned towards the second world war. Because they

are infected with this whole knight of a shiseido samurai idea which is to say overcoming. Of course you have a softer yin version of it but it hooks a lot of male psychic pushing through it. There is a kind of masochistic turn in terms of how much suffering you can take, you feel like giving up and you are pushed through and pushed through. Why? If you are tired, lie down. If you find you are always lying down, then it's a good question to ask, *what am I doing?* because you are doing. But if after a while you don't feel so tired, you get up. The only rule for a yogi is eat when you're hungry, sleep when you are tired and do whatever else you have to do. So it's non-intentional.

If we are here, we don't need to do Zazen to get here, doing Zazen will stop you being you. This view you find it little bit in some of the Zen masters, specially the early one, but mainly it got activated into a system of hierarchy and patriarchy.

In Zazen, there is instruction to not move. *Why would you not move?* To me its insane, people sit for a very long time, they have excruciating pain in their legs, you move 2 centimetres the pain stops. Are you interested in pain? *No! I have to keep my mind completely steady otherwise the pain is dominating my experience.* You moved and pain stopped, where is the pain? No pain.

We are movement, the egoic world is world of movement, movement is moving. Move with the movement. It's very different, it's a completely different view, its non heroic. Its non romantic and non heroic. There is no secondary gain. It's very interesting and it's interesting to see how different cultures have taken down dharma up in different ways. Tibetan culture is extremely hierarchical just like Japanese and Chinese traditional culture. We live in a democratic way, our dharma is going to develop quite differently. Any other thoughts?

How to remain relaxed in uncontrived presence

Question: Could you tell us a little bit more about remaining relaxed in uncontrived presence. How to do this?

James: So imagine you are 16 years of age, and we are all your parent friends and we are here talking together, and you are bored. But you have to be here. You don't want to be here. You can't go, otherwise your dad says, *no money for you this weekend, so you got to be here. Just sit.* You're completely bored. And the boredom dissolves, nothing to do nowhere to go. That's halfway to this. Bored. When you are bored nothing hooks you! You are a small child and you are bored, you go to you dad and says, *what will I do? Dad says, I don't know whatever you want you can do. Come on just do something but what will I do? What will I do?* And it sounds like boredom. So now you are going into 'I don't know what to do'.

Now we are learning to be bored without complaint. We are just being bored. If you are bored then you can't connect. You are halfway through the meditation, nothing interests me. Don't want to do. Nothing. Now you are almost at full meditation. This is all. Why we are here, what are we doing, then a thought arises in you mind, *oh, a sensation... boring.* You can't interest me. Now your mind is becoming very calm, just bored, uninvolved. Then you have to tilt that, make it a little bit softer, uninvolved. Of course if you feel a lack inside, you want to be involved, you want something to happen, that's really being a teenager, they are bored because they can't find something to involve with. But I am suggesting is that you get a sense of this.

The value of the object is the value I attribute to the object. And when you are bored you lose the power to invest meaning in the object. You've got some music, you usually like, I can't be bored today. Subject and object conjoin, so it is like that you are sitting in a practice. You have given up.. no thought, just another boring day. You have no intention, you are not trying to do anything, there is no arousal. Of course if you go too much into it, you might sink and you might go asleep. But you just finding yourself here, it's happening, but it has nothing to do with me.

We have to visit it again and again because your ego self-doesn't want to get early retirement. Because you are connected, the world will give you plenty of motivation. Like you see someone's face, and you say, *come on child, what's the matter.* Would you do that?

Comment: May be not or may be with a friend!

Let the beauty in: Meditating sky to sky

James: This is very important, there is a difference being equal in which you see everything. But you don't have to say this is special this and special that and there is a kind of indifference. So maybe for you the boredom example is not very helpful then I apologise. Maybe useful for other people.

But if your issue is that that you cut off a little bit and say, leave it out there. You actually have to find a way to give yourself more, you have to find 5 things which are simple and easy to find and that you love or you could love. May be sunsets, sunrise, ducks on the water, near the lake, maybe a favourite tree down by the water or the best place to buy queso (cheese dip), something which is just ahh!! And then you give yourself to that experience and you watch, ah! the sun is going down, the light is getting very soft and its rippling underway and you are just!

Beauty is very very important, because beauty is very gentle key to open the door. Specially maybe for you, it's receptive. You have to let the beauty in. Otherwise you do it but you find that I don't know how to do it. I don't know what to do. So you stay inside yourself, a bit cut off, a bit lost. So the main thing is open the doors and let the beauty in. Let the taste of best queso crumbles into you mouth and you don't brush the flakes away, you just feel the sensation. Aah! Its ungraspable, the smell.. ah! It's so important, because it's all about dissolving, and then you start to see I am here and I can't find myself but it's not lost, it just is. So soft opening may be very useful for you. And I wouldn't try just from the sitting. I think looking at the beautiful tress, flowers and give yourself a chance to let the flower in and the flower will clean you up. Otherwise you are trying to do it and you can't do it by doing it. Because the emptiness in the heart is filled by the world.

I don't know about your life but if childhood has been difficult I think there are only three things that help, one is profound art and second is natural beauty and third is some kind of spiritual hope. It's some kind of expansive feeling that's so big that it can dissolve the pain and the fear from the past. But other people they can't do it very much, falling in love with someone is very difficult because they can never give you enough if you have a big hole in your heart. But the sunset can do that, the beauty, the hills, walking

up the hill even by yourself, the twilight, the softness, the black birds singing, I think that's a useful way in. And then you just relax in the moment, you don't have to sit down and do the practice.

In the tradition, they call it meditating sky to sky, this infinity out there and the infinity in here and the song of the black bird just links these two infinity. Then you have the flavour of that. Now you know a little bit of what it tastes like and you eat more. Any other questions/ thoughts.

Relaxing: Do many short-time practice sessions

Audience: I have question about the duration of meditation. Do you say it's better to do short meditation sessions?

James: According to this tradition, always do many short ones. You can do 10 minutes and then stretching and then you sit down again. The danger is that if you are doing a long one, you settle into something and you find that actually its more of the same, you tune into an particular waveband and in a sense now I am meditating, now I am getting more confidence that I am meditating, so this is the last thing we want to find out here.

Because no one is mediating, it's neither meditation nor non-meditation. It's just present with this arising, so we relax and open. And then gradually of course the forms of our lives start to come back again. So you take a little time out and then you enter that again, and then gradually you keep the openness of the sitting in the formation of the world simultaneously. But for us, because we are so used to of involvement and doing and being the one who can make things happen, if our meditation become too active even if we are just focusing our attention again and again, it blocks the receptivity.

Our culture is so yang, so masculine, so animus oriented, the anima is very weak and hiding in the shadows. So if you want the infinite receptivity to awaken, we have to privilege this again and again. Go into the place of not knowing. Just here I am, here I am and even that thought dissolves. And then little hairs of thought patterns starts to wrap around you and you go into a kind of cocoon, then you go around, move, have a stretch then come back and sit again. That's the reason it's done that way. Of course with time

you start to do it longer, but it's always to have a sense that I am just sitting, not doing anything. As he said don't do anything at all.

Just outside of Tibet in a place, there is a very old lama. He escaped early on and he then started a ad hoc school for young children and he taught many many rituals, they have all kind of shamanistic rituals and movement and so on. And one day, someone he had trained with came to see him who had just come out of prison in Tibet, he was in prison for 30 years. They were talking and the one who was in prison for 30 years said, *the only thing we could do in prison was Dzogchen, we will just sit with our mind, we couldn't say any mantra, we could not do anything at all and in breaks we had to do all kind of really hard work and the only thing we could do with dharma was just completely be there.* And then the old lama was thinking, what have I been doing with all these rituals, manipulating the patterns of the world. Since that time, he only teaches Dzogchen. And it's exactly that because it's present everywhere, you are not applying it; it's not a tool like a screwdriver, it's not some mantras and mudras to shift the energy of the world. Because its open and empty, it can be filled with any situation.

So whether you are sick or you are happy or you are lonely or you are in love, whatever is happening, there's space within the open presence. Whereas the more intentional you are, the more it's a little bit artificial, then you have to install it in each situation because it is something you are doing. So the idea is to relax into it. Finding yourself in it. It is always there but you think your way out of it, you haven't gone anywhere else, you are just in a little whirlwind of thought, so relaxing in, relaxing. Actually you're not relaxing into it, because you are always already into it, you are relaxing out of fantasy that you weren't in it, and when you come out of that fantasy, you are already in it.

Okay, so we take a break.

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Sunday Session four

In the practice, there are no mistakes

Just to repeat something we've looked at before – in order to make a judgment, you have to have something to judge and you also have to have a judgemental orientation.

Various things arise in the practice. Like when I was sitting just before meditating, I got a little sleepy and then the feeling vanished. For a moment you can judge that and think, *oh, what am I doing? I should be able to meditate. I should da da da..* it's just gone. So as soon as you go into grasping at it and making it something, the elaboration of interpretation happens very quickly. But if you just stay with the vanishing of the experience, there is no basis for judgment.

So they say, there are no mistakes. Of course, in what we've been calling the house of compassion, when you're relating to other people, you can be skilful or not skilful. But when you're sitting in the practice, there is no mistake, except to imagine that there is a mistake and so have something to worry about and try to correct and so on. So in a sense, first, we have to practice compassion to ourselves because if you can stop giving yourself a hard time because you get lost or confused or the practices are not clear, that capacity to stay with yourself in your lostness is again extending your reach so you can include all of you. And that including all of you as the basis for including all of other people, whether it's children, friends, or enemies, whatever it would be, we stay open to them. So kindness and tenderness is the absolutely key thing. There's just a little bit more of the text.

Mahamudra compared with dzogchen

Are there any more questions before we move on or things you want to raise?

Audience: Is it important to understand the difference between Mahamudra and Dzogchen?

James: In the Simply being book, there's a couple of chapters either at the beginning or at the end, where the author says that some people say this is Madhyamika, some people say it's Mahamudra or some people say it's

Dzogchen but these are only names. There is no difference. So on that level, there is no difference. But in terms of the formulation, in the different systems, you get different styles, you get different styles of Mahamudra. But it's always about the same thing. Start with the ground. Start with the base, which is the mind itself, which is inseparable from emptiness. And everything comes from that. And that's why, they're both called direct paths because you start with where you are and work with the difficulties of that rather than starting here and trying to get there. So in that sense, there are very similar.

Usually in this Mahamudra, there's often a bit more concerned for what arises in the mind. So you might look at these questions about where the thoughts come from? Where the thoughts stay? Do they have a goal? Do they have colour and shape? Do they have any dimension? In Dzogchen, you might apply this directly to the mind itself. But the content of the mind and the mind are not different. So you can go through one door or the other, it doesn't make any difference.

There are so many names in the Tibetan Buddhism, they talk about the dharmakaya and the Buddha nature, thusness and how it's been from the very beginning and all these terms mean pretty much the same thing. But because it's ungraspable, it's not about which term will take me there. No term or no concept will take you there. It's more like which way of engaging with this is most proximal to me, which is closest to me that allows ME as I AM to get there. You know, what will be like a shoe horn for me given my qualities, because you don't want to turn your qualities into an obstacle or something to be changed, but through some ways of thinking about things, you feel more at home, it just resonates with you.

For example, in terms of the ground, you get the description of the ground, these five qualities that I was looking at earlier. Then in terms of the path, you have these three aspects that we looked at before- original phase and the complexion and the expression. And then in terms of the result you have- the dharmakaya (the mind of the Buddha), the Sambhogakaya (the display form), and the Nirmanakaya (the Apparitional form). And then you read in the text that these are not different. There's no difference between them, but it appears to be different while you go through the illusion of being on the path. So there's a huge complex vocabulary because Tibetan

culture focused on this to a large extent for 2000 years. So they had a lot of time of making fine divisions and so on.

And of course, different people have different inspirations. So yeah, there are many books. You look around and you find the books and the teachers that appeal to you and they give you a sense of what that might be. It's not about which way is the best or which lineage is the best, this has no meaning in it. My teacher always says, the best method of meditation is the one you're most likely to do. If you do it, if you do anything, it will be helpful. So you may have the highest teaching and you put it in a box and never do it. This is wonderful, but useless.

You're most likely to do something if it's close to you. So for some people, dancing with awareness is the best or singing in a choir could be very good. So singing in the choir, you have to harmonize with other people, you have to find your own voice, not dominating, not subdued. You have to be on the pulse in the moment in yourself, watching the conductor, hearing the other singers, maybe reading the score at the same time. There's a lot of things going on and the best way to do that is relaxed and open, because then your voice is not going to be tensed. So if you look at yourself, you can see maybe through cooking, gardening, maybe through a lot of sitting practice. If you see your own qualities, then you can see how to work with yourself. It's never out there. It's here. We are the issue. Who am I? How am I?

The answer doesn't lie in the object

Audience: I was thinking to go a place where they had a different way to do it, they remove the names of things, so there is no naming things. And here in this teaching, it is more like being open and let through. Is it?

James: It's quite difficult to take the names of things.

In fact, the naming is not really a problem if the name is empty. So if you see the emptiness of all names, you can play with the names. But to try to be in the world without any kind of naming, that will be very artificial because you have a human body and we do communication. So language could be the

problem, or couldn't be the problem. It depends how you are with it. In terms of the transmission of these ideas, there are many ways, there are ritual ways with the crystal and the mirror and the peacock feather and they wave it in front of you and you look at it, and then you say what the heck? Aren't peacocks an endangered species? Should we be doing this? You could have a lot of thoughts at the wrong time. So these things may have worked for someone at some time. Then they're turned into a method. Then they're turned into something which should work for you if you are ripe. This is just so shitty. Because you start with the value of the person. Then you have a method to help the person. Then you have the true method which is better than the person. Now with the true method, we see the faults of the person. Clearly you are not ready for this high teaching! (Audience laughing). That's how these things work. And then you have hierarchy and patriarchy comes in the back door.

So it's always, you have to look at yourself. You have to see how do I tie myself in knots? How do I get lost? What annoys me? What opens me and observe yourself. It doesn't matter what's happening in life. You have an experience, any kind of experience, eating an ice cream, or you look at the kind of ice cream, you think, *Oh, I'll have that one! That'll be really good!* And then you have it and it's a kind of disappointment, *that's not what I thought. I thought the chocolate will be different.* So in that moment, you observe your mind. Where is your mind?

So there you see your identity had got merged in the idea. This is going to be a really good ice cream. And now the subject and object didn't align. So the subject is pulling back from the ice cream. So you expanded and then you contracted, this is the energy of the mind, always pulsing. Then you see, oh, moment by moment, this is happening, whatever it would be, you're outside and it's nice. And suddenly it's raining and you get soaked, the key thing is don't go into the conclusion, *now I'm soaked, I've got to go home like this.* And then either the thoughts go on or you put a big full stop. This is it. Don't do that. Stay with the moment after the experience. It intensifies. And then it collapses. And the intensity is incredibly useful because this is all there is. And then, of course it vanishes because everything vanishes and now there's a gap. And if you're present in the gap, then the next one comes and the next one comes. So everything is pulsing through the space. So it's like that, there's no definite way to do it.

Someone I know, they went to see Namkhai Norbu and they told me, *Oh, he was going to do this direct introduction to the nature of the mind. He has maybe five hundred people sitting there waiting. Then he goes, PHAT! And then people ask themselves, What, is that all it is? What! We went all the way to Tenerife and all we got was this PHAT. What was that all about?!!*

Because you have an expectation. The teacher's doing their best, but you have a misalignment. For some of the people who were there maybe they get it, for other people they don't. It's never in the object. When the teacher goes PHAT! or holds a crystal or something, that is an object. The answer doesn't lie in the object. It lies in the 'us', the 'we', the co-emergence in that moment. And for all kinds of reasons, the timing can be off. You could be a bit preoccupied or bit dull, or it wasn't just the right day for you, and it doesn't happen. However, if you stay with the disappointment, then you can get it. Interesting.

Experiences display themselves in the clarity of mind

So now let's finish this text.

Like the flow of a great river tree elimination will be with you wherever you stay.

When directly, you see there are no fixed objects in the room, there is only experience. So you look at people, you look at the chairs, the tables, you look at everything here, and it's experience. So that's the thing like with the Phat!, you're waiting for something, that's an experience. If you stay on the experience as the experience dissolves, subject and object vanish at the same time, then you have the space. So wherever you are, you are in the flow of experience. It's not me encountering so many different things. *When I was in Geneva. Let me tell you about some of them. It was so nice. I saw the river. I saw this. I saw that.* It's not like that. You didn't see anything because then you're positioned in 'I'. We are receiving like a mirror. We are like a mirror and everything is arising in the mirror. And what arises is both subject and object simultaneously. So that's what it means by the great river. And as he says,

True Illumination will be with you wherever you stay.

Where are you going to stay? In the mirror. The only place to stay is in the mirror, as the mirror. Then everything is passing through you. If you stay in your isolated identity, you get some things and not other things. If you stay in the mirror, you get everything. The mirror is, is that second stage of the complexion. Everything is arising in it. So wherever you are, if you're present, there's nothing else to do. There's nowhere else to be. There's nothing other than that. Then he says that this is the presence of uninterrupted. Buddhahood, the great happiness free of all samsaric objects. So samsaric objects are born from the splitting of subject and object. There has to be a subject to have a samsaric object. So when you relax into this openness and experiences displaying itself in the clarity of your mind, you're no longer a subject having experience, but the experience is displaying itself.

So you get every flavour of the experience but without appropriation, that's why you can have more. Because if I grasp my watch, the potential of my hand is reduced. I have a watch, but I can't do anything. I gained the watch, but I lost my hand. So in the same way, when you grasp at experience in your mind, you're in that experience, lots of other stuff goes on, but you don't get it. So this again is the paradox. The less I grasp, the more I get, except that that I don't get it, but I receive it. So openness and receptivity goes together. So this is why it's free of samsaric objects. It doesn't mean that you become kind of stupid and you don't know what a car is. Everything is arising at once, but houses are not the same as cars. They are the same in being illusory manifestation. They are different in their mode of arising. They have different qualities. For the house to hurt you, you would have to walk into it and bang your head on it. For the car to hurt you, you just walk on the road, that's all you have to do. You are a part time player, the car will do the rest. But the house is not gonna hurt you, you have to keep hitting your head up in the house. That's how it is. Isn't it?

So if you stay relaxed and open, you get the taste of everything in an instant, and then it's gone. So you will be more intelligent, more quick, more spontaneous, more intuitive because the whole field has arisen. You lose spontaneity when you collapse onto a particular object. You stay with the field, you move with everything in the field. Then the energy of your presence is moving in the field and your presence is completely stable. So your body can move, but you're completely grounded. So that's what this

means. And it may sound quite difficult to do, but you just have to give yourself into that practice.

After a while, we would come to an end, while we're walking down the street, there's a lot in the street, relax and open, take the whole thing all the time. No judgment. As noble said, 'don't enter into judgment'. Take it all at once, children moving, people, dogs, cars, trams. How is this? Adverbs everywhere. Arising and passing, arising and passing. There's nothing to do with it, but because you're present, if somebody said what was happening in the street, you can probably describe a lot of things. You weren't blanked off. You're not in a avoidant haze, but you haven't hung on to any particular part. So that's how one would proceed.

The naked as it is-ness

And the reason it's called the great happiness is that the contentment is arising from the ground. You're at peace with yourself. We began by looking at the difference between lack and excess and how they post together. But when the mind is completely open and everything is arising at once, there is no lack because you're always full of what is here. So in the language of Dzogchen, you say everything is intrinsically perfect just as it is. It is what it is. And if you're open to it, all arrives at once. And therefore there is no lack. And because the mind is vast, there's never excess. You don't get overwhelmed.

So of course in work situations, it's more difficult because you're in a confined space, your boss has an agenda, they're making trouble. Then it it's more difficult because there's something to react against. You've come into a judgment. You say, *this isn't right, we shouldn't be doing this*. That is it all. In order to function in the job, you have to have the thought, but not have the thought. If you've to tell the boss the thought, they'll get pissed off. If you don't express the thought, you feel like you are in India, it's not easy.

CR lama used to say that with these three- the mind of the Buddha (the Dharmakaya), the enjoyment mode (the Sambhogakaya), the momentary manifestation (Nirmanakaya)- the Dharmakaya is easy. It's completely easy. It's your own mind. The difficult thing is maintaining the Nirmanakaya in

relation to other people, because it's so easy to get caught up in a judgment of liking or not liking. And then you're immediately shrunk. You shrink them. You shrink yourself. The only way not to shrink yourself is not to shrink other people. If I want to be free, I have to let you be free to be how you are. So however your bosses, that's how they are. *Oh yeah! But why do they...* let that thought go. *But I hate it when they...* This is them. This is how they are. Don't object to how things are, because it's how they are. So when he says, 'intrinsically perfect', you say, *but I have some reservations. Who's right- Big Buddha or little boy?* Big Buddha's always right. It's intrinsically perfect. *But why is my boss like this?* That's not the right question. Why is my boss like this for ME? I'm making my boss like this for ME. I say my boss shouldn't be like this. I say that. Who is tying me in a knot? ME! Who can untie me from the knot? ME! Oh, okay. So now stay in this path of great happiness and untie knots.

In Japanese shops, assistants spending a lot of time learning to tie these incredible knots and make packages. We go in the other direction, we have the unties of knots, whatever kind of knots, we take them out, we don't want the packaging. We don't need any of that. Just the naked as it isness, don't tie knots.

'Intellect that gets emptiness' is purified in its own place

So then he says,

All phenomena are themselves intrinsically empty. And the intellect that holds to that emptiness is purified in its own place.

So this is important because the word intellect often is taken to have a negative connotation as if it was a kind of intellectual cogitation employing lots of concepts where you make sense of the world. But he's saying that when you see that all the phenomena in the world, things arising in your body, mind, things in the room, what other people say and do, all of these phenomena are intrinsically empty. They don't have to be emptied. They appear but like a rainbow. When you see that, the intellect that gets that emptiness, that is to say the brightness of your mind that sees the emptiness of the phenomenon is purified in its own place.

Let's stay with that example. You've got a boss who's on your case, who does things you don't like. So you can feel the negative feeling that aversion arising. *I'm doing this. I'm cooking up a storm.* You look at shape of boss- it's form and emptiness, sound of boss- it's sound and emptiness, it's all movement in space. I'm not drawing any conclusion about my boss. I'm not taking the concept as the master of the definitive statement about the boss. I'm just saying, Oh, empty, empty, intrinsically empty. I fill it with my crap. I can release my crap, then I see the intrinsic emptiness of the boss. And then when I do that, the intellect that sees the emptiness of the boss shows its intrinsic purity. Because that intellect which, if it was grasping at the concept and trying to make sense of my boss, *oh, I remember he told me when he was a child. It was like this and that. And no wonder... Oh, now I understand!* that kind of insight is worth nothing because it's just a construct. It's created in your mind.

Whereas when you really see that appearance and emptiness is the form of the boss, sound and emptiness is the speech of the boss, and awareness and emptiness is the mind appreciating the boss. There's nobody there to have a strong opinion about. So your intellect that would be building up a picture has nothing to get hold of, it's purified in its own place. Does that make sense? You don't have to stop thinking because if you had to stop putting words on to things, you'd be busy all the time. Words won't arise if there's nothing to stick them onto.

Free of all intellectualisation, there is no involvement with mentation. Mentation means the movement of mental experiences to form patterns. So you avoid intellectualisation like applying some kind of interpretive theory from literature or philosophy or some analysis, or economic theory or whatever; you're not trying to add value by adding concepts because you realise concepts don't add value. Concepts add complexity. You may want to have complexity, it may be useful, but they don't add true value because everything is complete from the beginning in itself, it doesn't need any value added to it, but it could be unpacked in its potential. So concepts could do that. They could tease it out in some way.

So there's no need to intellectualise. You don't need to think about what the Buddha said. You just have to hear it, understand it and apply it. It's not a theory. It's a way of looking. It's a way of looking. And when you look in that

way, you don't need to build up patterns of interpretation. If we stay with the image we've had of these two houses, he's again talking about the house of wisdom here. You don't need mental processing to get close to the truth of how it is. That's self-evident if you leave it alone.

Intellectualisation is useful for understanding concepts

If you then want to talk to someone else, say you meet a friend and they say, *Oh, I hear you're interested in meditation. Can you tell me something about it?* Of course you have to say something. You use language, you try to get a sense of their education and their background assumptions. So you can use some images or ways of understanding they might be familiar with. You're using intellectualisation in the service of understanding. That's good. That's compassion. But in terms of awakening to emptiness, intellectualisation, doesn't help.

So again, we're back with it, that you can't say intellectualisation is wrong. It's not helpful for some things, it's helpful for other things. A screw driver is helpful for some things and a hammer is helpful for other things. I don't like the notion of tool too much of technique but you have to have access to different ways of responding according to circumstances. What is the right way to respond? It depends on the child. For example, a lot of people who practice child psychotherapy would say, *don't try any explanation with children. You should bring them into kind of play where you can loosen up some of the emotions and so on and do things through metaphor, through puppets and so on.* And all of that is useful.

But sometimes if you have a 10-year old and the parents are divorcing and they hate each other and mom's crying all the time and dad's going off with another woman, you need to say something to the child.

You: In the playground, are there any people who are not very nice?

Child: Yeah.

You: What do the bullies do?

Child: Oh! they make people cry and they steal their chocolate.

You: And why would they do that?

Child: They don't care.

You: Hmm. Okay. Do you think people stopped doing that when they grow up?

Child: No.

You: Is your dad a bit like that? Has your dad stolen your mom's chocolate?

That's what people do. You think he's your dad but he's just someone who steals people's chocolate. How did now the child's able to think a little bit, *oh! my dad's a bully*. Because as long as the child's still idealising that they can't think, so what they've got in their mind is, *my dad is good, my mom is good, I love them both, they hate each other.. aargh!* It kills the child. The therapist has to go to take a side, not always on the side of the mom against the dad, but you have to take a side sometimes. So that's a strategic intervention for a purpose, because you're clear about what you're doing.

The child needs to be able to understand what's going on. Why are people cruel? Why does the dad who I love, make my mom cry. They can't bring it together. And you have to show them. People are complicated. Like we've been looking as we can. Good people can do bad things, bad people can do good things. The child wants to stay in the naivety of 'I love my dad', he's the best dad in the world. Okay. That's an emotion. And it would be beautiful to maintain that emotion, but it doesn't help you find your way through. The child says, *I have one weekend with dad and dad is with his new girlfriend and the new girlfriend and the new girlfriend doesn't like me very much*. What do we do with that? We read Hansel and Gretel. We try to help the child see what a stepmother is. The woman wants to be with your dad. And the woman would actually like you to be dead. This woman wants your dad and not you, your dad's keeping you. This is a shitty place for a little person to be in. So you have to resource them.

So this is why we need to be able to think that intellectualisation having a conceptual understanding can be useful. You don't want to overload them, but if you don't have the tools for making sense of it, it just grinds inside and grinds inside. So always we have to be very skilful. What is required here? What is the problem? Start with the problem. What's the issue? What is wrong? What is not working? What is not functioning? The child is trapped in a mistaken identification that his dad is the best person in the world. But this oldest evidence building up actually he's pretty selfish. He's pretty selfish. He tells you he's going away. He's got two weeks with his new

girlfriend. Oh, and they're going to the Bahamas and they're going to go sailing. And Oh, you're not invited. Wow. The scissors have come out, you've been cut out of the picture. You have to be able to think about it. It's hard.

He says that free of intellectualisation, there's no involvement with mentation. It means you don't use mentation to support you on the path. It's not the path to awakening that needs thought. It's when you come into the world with other people in their complexity, you have to think of the complex variables because different people will have different ideas. So this dark Buddhist teacher is never saying that thoughts are bad or concepts are unhelpful. They're unhelpful for some things. If you try to construct your identity out of concepts, it wouldn't be helpful because it will always crumble away. If you go into yourself and you find that you are this radiant awareness, then you can use concepts in a playful way and with more connectivity.

'Empty' to 'All' to 'This', 'This' to 'All' to 'Empty'

So then he says,

This is the path of all the Buddhas.

This is what all the Buddhas wake up to.

For the one who is truly fortunate I have composed this epitome of my true teachings.

That means Marpa, this Tibetan man.

By means of this may all sentient beings abide in the great openness.

So that's the end of that teaching. It's a very beautiful little text. It's not technical, but hopefully it gives you a mood. Mood is primary. So one of the things that's very helpful to practice with this kind of text is go into the botanical gardens, you see so many different kinds of flowers and plants. And just spend five minutes with the cactuses, go into the really hot house where the banana trees are and so on, and just be with that and feel the heat and the moisture and see how they're growing. And there's a mood that comes.

And then you go into that dry house where they have the cacti, and then you go into some other parts of it, where all the ferns are. And in each of these areas, something will happen in you. There's a particular kind of mood that's constellated. And then you go out in the countryside and you walk where there's a lot of rock or you walk into a forest or you walk by the Lake and just stay very close to your experience. Don't think about, just absorb it and feel all these moods sometimes pathless, sometimes so poignant, some kind of fear or disgust or this walking in the swamp having all these slugs everywhere. Without blocking it, just say, *Oh, this is my life. I am part of this. I am moving in the world of movement and I am unchanging awareness.*

So the meditation from this text is a participative meditation in life to open more to circumstances, to allow experience to arise and to stay with the experience and see its emptiness. So empty to all to this, this to all to empty. And you go up and down like a child practicing scales on the piano up and down, up and down and then it becomes automatic. So when you go into an intense situation maybe at work or a quarrel with your partner and everything is closed in, you're used to this... all empty...aargh! like that pulsing, pulsing, pulsing. That's really what he's saying. Not to take life too seriously. Okay. Let's do a final meditation.

Well, we've had this time to study and practice together. So any merit arising from this, we share with all sentient beings, beings in different forms of life, animals, insects, birds, hungry ghosts, gods. So many possibilities of manifestation of life. And we are just one of these manifestations but we have this precious opportunity to develop depth and light. So whatever gain we have can imagine rays of light spreading out from your heart to all beings however they are; forming connectivity that we say we never abandon sentient beings. May all beings be happy, may all beings awaken.

And when we keep this warmth in our heart, when we walk down the street, we're not meeting strangers. These are beings moving in the dharmadhatu. They are moving in the sphere of the Buddhas. So we are always already connected with every living being. So the boundary we make between ourselves and other people can dissolve and we just have this warmth and fellow feeling. It may not be possible to speak this because of social

conventions and people's self-construct but we can remain open whatever happens. And that allows us to loosen the habit of judgment and relative evaluation. So, this is a beautiful path. It's been a pleasure to be here with you sharing some of this. We don't know if we ever meet again, but I wish you good luck on the path.

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(End of transcript)

APPENDIX

A Brief Exposition of Mahamudra (by Maitripa): The Text

Making salutation in the state of total satisfaction, I will tell you about the great openness (Phyag-rGya Chhen-Po).

Everything that is at all possible is just one's own mind - looking for truth in externals is the working of the confused intellect. All appearances are essentially empty as in a dream. And mind also is just the movement of memory and ideas. Without inherent self-nature it is like the energy of the wind and being empty in essence it is like the sky. Everything that is possible abides in evenness like the sky - thus do I express the great openness.

One's own essence cannot be demonstrated and so the very nature of the mind does not move from or modify the actual state of the great openness. If one can truly realise this then all phenomenal appearances become mahamudra. This is the great all-pervading natural mode. Remain relaxed in your uncontrived nature. This is the natural mode free of thought. This meditation abides in itself without seeking anything else. The kind of meditation that goes searching is just the working of the confused intellect. Just like the sky or a magical illusion, in the absence of both meditation and non-meditation, how shall one talk of separation or non-separation?

For the yogi who has this understanding all virtuous and harmful actions are liberated by the knowledge of this actuality. All mental afflictions become the great original knowing and act as the yogi's friend, just like a fire rushing through the forest. How then shall we talk of going or staying?

No matter how much you stabilise your mind in a quiet place, if you have not realised this truth you will not be freed from states that are merely circumstantial. But if you experience this truth then what could possibly bind you?

When you abide unwaveringly in this state there is no need of constructed meditations for your body and voice. Whether or not you are in what is called profound balance (mNyambZhag), there is no need for contrived meditation involving antidotes. Without attempting to accomplish anything at all, whatever arises will be seen to be devoid of inherent self-nature. All appearances are self-liberating in this infinite hospitality (Chhos-dByings) and all thoughts are self-liberated in and as the great original knowing. This is the non-dual perfect evenness of the natural mode. Like the flow of a great river, true meaning will be with you wherever you stay. This is the state of ongoing buddhahood, the great happiness of being free of all samsaric objects.

All phenomena are themselves naturally empty and the intellect that holds to that emptiness is purified in its own place. Free of all intellectualisation, there is no involvement with mentation. This is the path of all the buddhas.

For the one who is truly fortunate I have composed this epitome of my true teachings. By means of it may all sentient beings abide in the great openness.

This concludes Maitripa's exposition of the great openness.

It was received directly from that sage and translated into Tibetan by the Tibetan translator
Marpa Chokyi Lodro.

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