GROUND, PATH AND RESULT IN DZOGCHEN

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October 8, 2020. Lecture 1 of 1

In dzogchen, we are primarily concerned with 'simplicity and clarity' versus 'the power of deluded imagination'. We usually translate 'Deluded imagination' as ignorance. Ignorance has two aspects: 1) not being attentive to how it is, and 2) imagining that it is other than what it is. So ignorance is simultaneously both 'a turning away' and 'a turning towards'.

I will now try to make this clear. When I use buddhist technical terms I will try to explain them clearly so that we all have some shared understanding.

So – the ground, the path and the result.

The Ground

The ground is the ground of everything or the source of everything or the base. It's translated in different ways, the word in Tibetan is 'zhi' [Tib. gZhi] which means a foundation, or can refer to the earth – 'sa zhi' [Tib. Sa gZhi] – the foundation that we are standing on. That might indicate that *zhi* is a metaphor suggesting to build something. When you build a house, for example, you have the foundation and then you construct on top. But we will come to see that it's not that kind of foundation.

The base in the dzogchen sense refers to 'the intrinsic', that which is there by itself, that which is inherent just as it is. Nobody has made it, it's not created by anyone, it has no beginning or middle or end. Moreover, it doesn't create anything. It is not like the idea of a creator god, as we have in christianity, which says, *God creates the world, he makes these things.*

As we study buddhism we learn about emptiness and that emptiness is not created. Everything has a quality of emptiness, and therefore nothing is created. And yet we have appearance! So emptiness is the ground of everything possible. It's the ground of anything that you could imagine, whether it is considered existing or non-existing. Without the ground, there would be nothing and the ground itself is nothing. What does nothing gives rise to? It gives rise to everything. Again we have a paradox. How come everything that we see – we look around, we see what's in our room, we look outside, we see cars and so on – how come all of this something-ness has the ground of nothing? dzogchen is a way of coming to understand this very precisely.

In this regard, dzogchen is no different from mainstream buddhism. The notion of emptiness is pervasive. Emptiness means ungraspability. When something is ungraspable, it doesn't mean that it's not there at all, that it's nothing at all. Ungraspable just means that that you can't get hold of it. Like the reflection of the moon in a pond, like a mirage on a hot summer's road, like a rainbow in the sky, you can't grasp any of these things yet it's undeniable that they are there.

False ground: the ground of I, me, myself

I will now describe this ground in some detail. But first let's take a little detour, and explore how we are used to a ground which is a false ground. This is a ground of I, me, myself: that I exist, that this is my body, that these are my possessions, that this is my life, and that this is how I live etc. Then there are the inner experiences such as memories, plans, hopes and fears. With outer experiences in the world, we make choices about where we want to go, what we want to eat and so on. The basis of all this activity is this seemingly irreducible, seemingly just there–ness of me: *I am here, just here.*

From the point of view of dzogchen all this is a false ground. This is where we get lost. Although dzogchen gives a very clear explanation of how this lostness occurs, it is not a dogma to memorise, since it is not something that we have to believe. Rather, the explanation is designed to be like a slight tilting of the head, a readjustment, so that you see more clearly. And then you see for yourself, oh! this is how it happens.

The key thing to be clear about is not to take dzogchen teaching as a belief system. The trouble with belief systems is that we then project and impose them on our world. The world is already full of beliefs and ideas, religious ideas, scientific ideas, political, economic, and so on. We know what it's like to be wrapped inside a belief. It may be a belief about something you are fond of, for example some particular artist or a musician or some aspect of national identity or a football team or your favourite flower. You may tell people that, *I believe that this is the most beautiful rose.* When you believe in something and give yourself to it, it shines more. This is a quality of how belief gathers energy which creates a particular kind of illustration, or illumination, to phenomenon. This is our own mind.

The ground as described in the Evocation of Samantabhadra

All appearances have the same ground

I will now introduce the ground as it's described in this very famous evocation of Samantabhadra, the 'Kunzang Mönlam'. In the first few lines Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha, sets out very clearly that this is our situation.

All the possible appearances and existences of samsara and nirvana have the same source, yet two paths and two results arise as the magical display of awareness and unawareness.

Samantabhadra is saying that all the possible appearances of samsara and nirvana – it means absolutely everything, whatever you have ever learnt and forgotten or what might be there in other countries, or if you imagine there are people living on Mars, or the coronavirus, or anything at all – all of this has the same ground as all the buddhas. All of these appearances have one ground, or the same ground, and from this ground or source or base, there are two paths and two results.

We can't say that the ground is just one thing, because it's neither one nor many. As soon as you say that it's one or many, you are implying that you are able to apprehend it, to take hold of it. But this ground is very slippery and so we have to be very clear from the beginning.

Although I am going to talk a lot and try to clarify all these things, the truth of this can't be said. So, the purpose of talking is like a massage; it's just to give you more looseness and freedom so that you don't take yourself too seriously, don't take buddhism too seriously and allow the flavour of the dharma to flow through. This is the most important thing. So, it is the same source for everything but two paths arise.

Awareness and unawareness arise like a magical display

In the third line, he says that awareness and unawareness arise like a magical display. A magical display could be like a rainbow in the sky, something you see but it's not there. It's magic because you can't see a particular cause for it. If you want to make a coffee, you go to the kitchen, you get water, the cup, the coffee, however you'd like to prepare it, in a percolator, and you have a chain of cause and effect. For example, if you don't pay the gas bill, your stove is not going to work. So there are many many factors that go into making a cup of coffee. There are many chains of cause and effect.

A magical display is referred to here as a 'cho-trul', [Tib. Chos sPrul] like a magician who could cause you to believe that something is there, when actually nothing is there. So we are already into appearance and emptiness. Illusion. Illusion means we experience something; there is experience (sound of clap) but nothing really arises, nothing substantial arises. It's appearance without substance. So whether you are aware of the ground or not aware of the ground, NEITHER is true. This is very important that NEITHER is valid. From the point of view of ethics, this is important.

In christian theology, if God is good and God created everything, then how come there is a lot of shit around. Who made all the bad things happen? Then you have to bring the devil in through the back door, some fallen angel like Lucifer because God is good but bad things happen. Oh! oh! you can't square a circle, this is a big problem.

Samantabhadra is not saying that this source or ground or base is good; it just is. In that sense, it is neutral. We have to remember in buddhism that neutrality or evenness or equanimity is always very important, no bias. Good and bad are two polarities but from the dharma point of view, evenness is more important because evenness allows a panoramic vision.

On an outer level when we say, *may all beings be happy*. This means that may even cruel/unkind people be happy, may selfish people be happy, may lazy

stupid people be happy. Whether they are hard working or meditating or looking at pornography, may they all be happy. That is to say that my wish for your happiness is not dependent on your qualities – it's not the result, you haven't earned it, it's not a reward. We need to keep that sense in our mind because it means that enlightenment is not a reward for activity.

This is where the view of dzogchen is very different from many other approaches that you find in big family of buddhism. According to others, if you want to gain enlightenment, you have to have the accumulation of merits, accumulation of wisdom, you have to spend many lifetimes in practice and helping other people. When you take the bodhisattva vows, you say, *in all my future lifetimes*, you think of many many lifetimes. So there is a big intention because there is something to arrive at, because bad is bad and good is good, samsara is samsara and nirvana is nirvana. *So I want to go out of the bad place and go to the good place. I am going from one place to another.* Kalu Rinpoche, for example, used to say that if you want to practise tantra, it's like going on an aeroplane; it will cost you more than going by train. So you have to have more merits and more wisdom and you spend your accumulation to practise tantra. There is a sense of cause and effect.

However here Samantabhadra is not saying that. The source, the ground, the base has no intention. This is quite a difficult idea for us because we believe in intention. We believe that the Dalai Lama has good intentions for all beings, that he is patient and kind and tolerant. We go to a doctor because we believe that they have an intention to help us. We go to dentist with the hope that the dentist will solve problems with our teeth. So we believe in intentionality.

The ground has no intention, it's not like a god. As we will see, this relates to two things: one is stillness and other is movement. Intention belongs to the direction of movement. Stillness has no movement. The mind in its purity is not going anywhere, and nor is it doing anything. This is the quality of awareness or 'rig-pa'.

'Dharmadhatu' is the space within which are all dharmas

By this evocation of Samantabhadra may all beings awaken to full enlightenment in the security of infinite hospitality.

Then he says that by the evocation of this prayer may all beings awaken to full enlightenment. The 'dharmadhatu' is the space or the openness or the unborn quality within which are all dharmas.

For example, when you look at the sky, you see a cloud, the cloud is in the sky. You don't find clouds outside of the sky, there has to be some kind of space or openness for cloud to be there, even the steam from your kettle has to go in space. The cloud is inseparable from space. Appearances are inseparable from emptiness or the unborn nature of the mind. These are all technical terms, we shouldn't grasp at them as saying they mean something definite; they are always about nudging us to think, Oh! Ah ha! Oh!

The path of dzogchen is about ease, relaxation, trust, it's not about striving. If you have done 100,000 prostrations, you will know a lot about striving. You will know a lot about pushing through when your body is tired. There are many many kinds of striving involved in different schools of dharma, but here we are concerned with the intrinsic, with that which is already there. So this is very important to see from the beginning otherwise confusion can arise.

According to the systems used in Nyingmapa and Kargyupa schools in particular there are nine yanas or main vehicles of dharma, each with many subsections. There is a plurality of possibilities each of which opens the view.

For example, an art gallery may display a sculpture and you can walk all around it. You look from this point of view, that point of view, another point of view; you can take a 100 different views of the sculpture. Each view is valid but none of them catches it because the sculpture is uncatchable for us who have only two eyes in this embodiment. Having that sense, then the thing to do is: looking from this way, this is what I see. Walking a little bit round and, *oh! This is what I see.* Likewise, if we are reciting a sutra to be born in Dewachen with Buddha Amitabha, *Please take me to this wonderful place where everything is perfect*, then that's a particular view. If we do a mandala meditation with a lot of visualisations, mantra and offerings, that's another view. If you are doing shamatha and vipassana, that's another view. So it's very important to be clear that there are many approaches. And not to mix up the different approaches.

Going back to the view from dzogchen that everything possible – all dharmas, everything in samsara and nirvana – is already within the infinite space of completion, then through recognising that we pray that all beings may awaken to full enlightenment. This is very important.

The way you awaken is by seeing 'how it is'. The way you get lost by imagining 'how it is'.

There is difference between seeing and believing. For example, the Sanskrit term for vipassana in Tibetan 'lhak-thong' is translated using the word for looking: it means the best way of looking. So when you do a vipassana body scan, you're going up and down, checking out what's arising and passing in the body. You begin by looking, how is this. You don't begin by assuming, *this is my body, I know what's in my body, I have pain in my shoulder,* you leave all of that on one side. And you just look, you scan up and you scan down, merely looking. Looking is very important in buddhism, Looking brings clarity, it brings closeness to how it is. By imagining, assuming and believing, this is how we construct the barriers that cut us off.

The ground is uncompounded

The source of all is uncompounded, self-arisen, infinite, inexpressible and impossible to label as 'samsara' or 'nirvana'.

Now he describes more precisely how the ground is. And he is talking about it as the 'kun-zhi', or the 'ālaya', a term that is used in different schools. Here it means the source or the basis of everything. The first point that Samantabhadra makes is that this ground is uncompounded. It hasn't been put together.

My shirt has been put together. There was cloth and in a factory, it was cut and then the sewing machine stitched it; the arms were stitched on. The colour on the shirt is a compound. My watch is compounded, it's made of little pieces. It has a transparent back and I can see the pieces moving around. Everything you see is compounded: the building you live in, cars on the road, food that you eat, everything is brought together. Even if you have a carrot, you might think, *oh*, *I went to a good shop and I got an organic carrot, it's completely organic* however it has water and without water the seed wouldn't have been able to sprout. The water is water from the soil which brings some minerals and chemicals into the carrot. The carrot is compounded. Everything we see is compounded but this ground is uncompounded.

If you have been studying general buddhism you will have learned about the five skandhas (aggregates or heaps). The fourth of these is called 'the compounded' or brought together or gathered. Our sense of being a human being comes together, because we make a composite; we gather different elements, we bring them into a situation, and then it seems to be there. Sometimes these are just things placed together. For example, when you are making a salad, you might have some tomatoes, some lettuce, some parmesan cheese, and so on. You put them all together, add some dressing and toss it a little bit. Each thing is still separate and you can see that. Or you might take some of these ingredients and put them into a pan and cook them together, then they dissolve and they merge. Either way, there is a sense of compounded. Even though you can see the separate ingredients of salad, you bring it together by bringing the word 'salad' into your mind. *Oh! this is a Caesar salad*, so it will have one kind of dressing on it. Or it's a Greek salad or a caprese salad and will have a different dressing. So now there are many many kinds of salad and they are all compositions, bringing together! Our own body is like that, except that ours is a little bit more cooked.

The ground, however, is not made, is uncompounded.

The ground is self-occurring

The second term used is 'rang jung'. 'Rang' means self or intrinsic or effortless and 'jung' means to arise, to appear, to be. So 'rang jung' means self-occurring. Nobody has done it. It isn't made by anyone and it doesn't make anything. Although, it is the ground or source or basis of anything in samsara and nirvana, it's not a big mega factory. It's not making samsara and it's not making nirvana. Both of these are intrinsically illusory, they are like magical formations. So, self-occurring means that it's just there.

The ground is infinite

Thirdly, the ground is 'long-yang', [Tib. kLong Yangs] a vast expanse, infinite. We know about finite. Our body is finite, its size and weight and also duration. All of us have been born and we're heading towards death and we don't know when the death will come. The amount of money we will make in life is finite. Even if you are very wealthy, the number of possessions you have are finite. That is to say that we can draw up an account of our existence. You might have 10 books in your house or 10000 books, depending on whether you are into literature. You might have 10 pairs of shoes or 100 pairs of shoes if you really like shoes. You might have three perfumes or just one favourite perfume or you might have 10 different perfumes. We can see that our life is finite. Everything has a shape, a beginning, a middle and an end.

'Long-yang' means without any measurement. It's vast, it's immeasurable, it's beyond comprehension. The mind cannot grasp hold at it. It slips out of any category.

When I was younger, I worked on a fishing boat in the North Sea. The boat went right out near Iceland where the waves were very high, huge and terrifying. The waves go right over the deck and you are tied on with chains so that you don't get washed away. All you see is this rolling sea and rolling sea. You don't see anything else, you don't know what east, west, south, north is, it's just water and water. That's it. It gives you a flavour of infinity. You don't have your bearings. If you swim out in the sea and you turn around you can see the beach with everyone playing on it. You can get your bearings and keep swimming out if you want to. You might say, *oh! I am heading for infinity but I want to know where the finite beach is, because I don't want to get drowned and get washed away.*

By 'infinite' Samantabhadra is indicating that there is no limit, no edge. Our body is always with some kind of edge. We are either standing or sitting or lying in bed or in the bath or in shower, our feet are resting on something, our bum is resting on something, or our back is resting on something. We stand in relation. Whether it's our shoes, or our chair, or a car seat, this contact with the other confirms that this is 'my' body. The chair is not me, but because I am linking with the chair, my body goes in a particular posture. I am finite. But what Samantabhadra is showing us is the basis of our own mind. When he is talking about the ground, this is not some sort of cosmological theory. This is *our* ground, this is the source of each one of us. Each person has the same source which is infinity. This is not some long long ago historical source; it is the actual source which is here moment by moment. Everything that we say, that we do, where we go, where we walk is always movement within the sphere of infinity. So the source is infinite.

As we get more into the teaching, we will start to see what this means in terms of the meditation practice and daily life.

The ground is inexpressible

The fourth quality of the ground is 'jo-du-me' [Tib. brJod Du Med] which means inexpressible. Another paradox. You may think, *James said that it is inexpressible but he keeps talking and talking. How is this possible?* Well, although it is inexpressible, we use communication – because we are in a human body – to get some proximity, some closeness, to this. The words are like an adjusting massage. The ground cannot be expressed directly but we are using the description, not as a map about something else, but as a way of bringing ourselves into connection.

It's inexpressible. Look around your room. Is there anything in your house which is inexpressible? Maybe you have a flower, maybe an orchid, you know the name 'orchid' but if you really look at the orchid, it's kind of... so beautiful but so strange, your mind kind of collapses when you look at the flower. The more you receive the flower, the more ungraspable it appears. Because the presence of the shape, the colour, perhaps the scent— it's excessive, it's beyond whatever words we put onto it.

Think of your parents. Even if they are dead now, you can say something about your mum or your dad. If you are in therapy you can talk about your mother for 20 years. You may go there three times a week and there is still something more to say about your mother. You never get to the end of your mother, there is always more. How is this? Because you can't catch your mother, you can't catch you father, your brother, your sister, you can't catch yourself. We are used to thinking that things are catchable, that shoes are definable, that motorcars are definable, that we can always say something about something. We need to understand this clearly.

You can tell the orchid what it is, where it come from and who first discovered it. If you simply look at the orchid, without saying anything or thinking anything, simply receiving the orchid then you will experience that the more you receive it, the less you can say. If you tell the orchid what it is, you won't see it but if you really see the orchid, it's full, and it doesn't need your words. IT IS. People always want to say something when they look at a baby's face but if you really look at a baby's face, you go silent; there is nothing to say. It's amazing. And that's same looking at children, or middle-age people, or old people; it's the same for all people. If you really look, if you really receive, if you stay in contact, then the vitality of the content brings the silence to the mind. This is the heart of meditation. So 'inexpressible' is indicating a quality of intimate connectivity. It's essentially the quality of non-duality.

Many of you will know the Heart Sutra which says that form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. For example, I have a teacup here, the teacup is something in my hand, it has got some tea in it, it's made up of rough clay, so it's quite heavy in itself. So I can say a lot about this, I can tell you from where I bought it, how long I have had it and so on. But if we just look at it... the way the paint has been applied in quite a quick carefree way/generous way... the more we look... the colour... you get into the colour and you're receiving... and as you're receiving you become quiet. If you are not receiving the cup, if you are telling the cup, if you are projecting onto the cup, then the mind can be quite busy. So this is a very important movement to become aware of.

When the mind is moving, everything is graspable and everything becomes finite. When the mind is not moving, when it is in open receptivity, then everything becomes infinite.

In our time together here we are going to spiral around these ways of understanding and wisdom from different point of views so that it becomes hopefully more vital and immediate for you.

The ground is beyond being labeled

Then the fifth quality of the ground that Samantabhadra says is that it's beyond being labeled as either samsara or nirvana, or both, or neither. No name can be pinned on to it. Whatever you say about it, that tells you something about *you* and not about it.

If somebody says, *I don't like cabbage, cabbage is horrible*. Cabbage is horrible means you don't like cabbage. It doesn't tell you about cabbage, it tells you about you. If someone says, *this is the best chocolate.* That tells you about the person speaking, it doesn't tell you about the chocolate. It means that this is the best chocolate in this world for this person. So this is very important to see – when we name things, when we seem to be describing an objective situation such as *I've got this nail down, I am speaking very precisely about this. This is how it is* – then this is me talking about me. I am showing you some patterning of my thoughts, my interpretations, my emotions, my likes, and dislikes.

The object doesn't exist. The object is a game that the subject plays. And the subject doesn't exist either. The subject is a game that the ground plays. So whatever opinions you may have – about President Trump, about politics, about Brexit, whatever – these are opinions. What are opinions? These are movements of the mind, a patterning of thought.

In Europe, there are many many big questions at the moment about climate change and responsibility and so on. Also we have conflicts where Armenians and Kurds and other people are being killed. Britain is a major seller of arms. Do we want to stop this and put British people out of work? This is hypocritical, paradoxical, complex. We wanted to be simple but we are not simple. We are on crossroad of many contradictory ideas.

So when the text says that you can't label the ground in terms of samsara and nirvana this is also an invitation to look at the labels you apply to yourself. If you had to give story of your life, how you have lived, what you believe in, you see that there are many aspects and they don't quite fit together. *I have divided myself, I live in contradiction. Oh oh! So maybe I shouldn't be so confident that I know how it is.* When we study text like this, we are also studying ourselves. Be careful with language, the text is saying. Don't think that you can take big terms like buddha or dharmakaya and throw them about and that you know what you are talking about! The danger is always that we create a fantasy object, a creation of your mind. What we have to do is to observe the process of speaking.

Tantra describes all sound as mantra. You do the mantra recitation, the visualisation; you dissolve the visualisation, you do the offering and so on, and then you have to see that everything is illusion – everything is the body of the deity. All sound is mantra. Everything that arises in your mind is the movement of Tara's mind or Chenrezi's mind or whoever's mind. In other words, don't solidify. Don't objectify. Keep it loose. Keep your hands open and loose. When your fingers are loose you can do so many different things. When you apprehend something, when you take hold of it, your hand is now the slave of what you have caught. It is the same with the mind. When the mind catches hold of a dogma – be it republican, democratic, whichever political or economic theory, christian sect, buddhist grouping – you become a prisoner, you become finite.

The mind is fluid and open, easy, relating and able to move. The body should be soft and pliable. This is the source, the text is saying. The source is not something fixed, it's not dead, it's not an object, it is an ungraspable presence.

Seeing the immediacy of 'how it is', is itself Buddha

With awareness of this there is buddhahood. Unaware of this, sentient beings wander in samsara.

Then he says awareness as this 'such-ness' is buddhahood. It means that if you see the 'such-ness' or the 'this-ness', the immediacy of how it is, it itself is Buddha. If you see ground, this is Buddha. However if you are 'ma-rig' [Tib. Ma Rig] (ignorant), if you are 'avidya', if you are not aware of how this is, then you are a sentient being wandering in samsara.

All sentient beings imagine that their ground or their base or their source is themselves. We may say, *I came out of God*, or *I came out of my mother's body*, or *I've come from my DNA and RNA* or *I am just myself*. These are all false grounds, these are theories of interpretations of a source for who I am. You might think, *I*

am a creature of my culture or my education or my gender. Or you might think, *I am a woman, I am a man, this is what I am, this is who I am...* for a while. Next life you can be a duck or a snail or a snake, you don't know. And if you are doing 'tong-len' and you are taking all the suffering of all sentient being, then you are also transforming yourself into different kinds of experience.

This line is saying that the source of sentient beings is not to see the source. The source of all buddhas is to see the source. So the source is vital. The ground is vital and this ground is our own mind. The ground or the source is not different from the awareness that sees it.

For example, I am putting my hands up and I am looking my hands and my fingers. I, the subject am looking at my hand, the object. Now you could say, the mind of James and the hand of James, are both in one James. So James is looking at his own hand, at himself. But when I look at my hand, I am seeing it as both subject and object. As subject because I can feel the sensation inside the hand as mine, I recognise that it is indicating my hand. Simultaneously I think, *ooh! gosh! that's hand, look how it is, I don't often look at my hand.* Now this is object. So subject and object pulsing across. Both of these are false identities. They are based on a capacity to conceptualise, they are not naked. They are not the simple actual. They are not uncontrived because they are interpretations which I make and which I have learnt to make in the course of my life.

Fish don't make interpretations like that. They are still in samsara. This is why we as human beings are very privileged, because how we are in samsara, is not like a cow or a goat or a cat. We are able to have experience and to review our experience. We are able to be mindful in a way that a cat can't be. The cat can be mindful waiting for the bird and ready to move if the bird is catchable. So in that way it is mindful of an object. But we can be mindful of our process of our own becoming. Because that kind of mindfulness is bringing you closer to what is meant by awareness.

The difference between consciousness (nam-par she-pa) and awareness (rigpa)

This term 'rig-pa' in Tibetan or 'vidya' in Sanskrit is important to be clear about. In dzogchen, it has a very specific meaning. The word 'rig-pa' can have many meanings in Tibetan language, it can mean one of the five sciences for example, architecture or medicine, it can mean knowing. In dzogchen, it always means 'non-dual awareness' that is to say 'not subject-object awareness'.

When you go to school, you have to pay attention to the teacher and learn something. You have to take what they are saying in through you ears and allow it to sync in to memory so that you also can speak it back to the teacher. The teacher asks, who knows what we have been looking at today? And the child says, *Oh! me! I know!* A child feels very happy, *Now I've internalised this information and I now have this knowledge, I am a subject. At first the knowledge was like the object coming towards me, but I internalised it and now I'm a subject able to use information and knowledge. So I am becoming a bigger person.* At each stage, as you become more skilled in internalising and re-patterning information, you get more power in the world. You can take on different tasks, you have more confidence. You become rounded as a person. All of this is what we call consciousness, the 'vijñāna' or 'nam-par she-pa' [Tib. rNam Par Shes Pa]

Consciousness means I know something. It could be that I know when the post office closes. Or that I know there is not much food in the fridge and so I need to go to the shops. It could be that I know the dates of my children's birthdays. It could mean all kind of things but it always has the sense that there is a subject and an object and a verb linking them together. So it's talking about about-ness. I know about flowers or I know about bicycles, and how to repair a burst tyre. I know about cooking different kind of vegetables. Probably it's better to steam broccoli. If you boil broccoli, it gets a bit soggy whereas if you steam it then you get a nice crunchiness; it's gorgeous. I know how to cook broccoli. In that sense there is a subject (I) and an object (broccoli) and a verb which is the active knowledge of the cooking. This is consciousness. A subject that knows something about an object. I know what do with the object, how to relate to the object. Consciousness (nam-par she-pa) is different from awareness (rig-pa).

Awareness is a capacity of illumination of what is_occurring. It is like a light going on, it's often compared to the sun in the sky. The sun shines, the rays of light shine out and they illuminate everything. Without light we will be in the dark, we wouldn't see anything. In the morning when the sun is coming up, we get the first light of the dawn and then the sun comes up over the houses or mountains, and then you have a direct illumination and brightness.

Before you tell the world what it is, the world is illuminated. Most of us are so intelligent that we are really stupid, that is to say our intelligence rushes forward and says, *oh*, *that's the church*, *this the house where the old lady lives*, *that's the car that was stolen last year.* So as soon as something is appearing we rush in, putting our labels, stamping in with we know.

Some of you will know this word, 'mahamudra'. Mahamudra means the great seal; it means don't seal the world with the names of objects. The great seal, in fact, is not sealing anything. The great seal is revealing everything by not sealing it inside. It's a car, it's red car, it's friend's car – as soon as you put this onto the object, you become in prison. You feel big as ego self – that I know this – but you become very small because now you are just sitting inside the place of what you know and it's not much. But if you see and receive the revelation of everything which is present, that's very different experience.

So awareness is free of subject and object. It's a co-emergence of revelation and illumination. When the sun comes up, the mountain is illuminated and revealed at the same time. As soon as there is illumination, there is revelation. Illumination and revelation comes together. I hope that make sense.

So revelation and awareness together, illumination and revelation – this is the meaning of 'rig-pa'. It doesn't mean solving a problem. It's not a cognitive activity. It's pre-conceptual clarity. It's a clarity that comes before you start thinking about things.

It doesn't mean that you shouldn't think about things. You have to know when the post office closes if you need to send a letter. Chogyam Trungpa said that if the mind of buddha is just open like space, then every hospital would need to have a Buddha Ward because if you were enlightened like that then you would be incapable of leading your life and you would be lying in bed all day with an oxygen tube.

So you have to be able to function in the world. The difference is that the buddha is able to see that the movement is the movement of the ground. Every movement is the movement of ground. As we will come to see, it is the radiance of the ground, like the radiance of awareness. We think, *I am going to the post office, so I better hurry up now otherwise it may close;* we have an internal dialogue shaping and directing what we do and how we are. That is why it is very important to be clear that this is consciousness and this is what it does. It is not bad, but it has a limited capacity.

Awareness is very different. We're going to be talking a lot about awareness. For example, maybe you are on holiday in a nice place, a little Greek island perhaps, and you are just going for a little walk. You are not in a hurry to go anywhere and you walk a bit and every so often you stop and look around; you just look. You don't know the names of the plants or anything; there is the sea, some boats on the sea, some clouds on the edge of the sky, some smell in the air... everything is coming to you. This gives you a little flavour of what is awareness. You are not working it out, you're not turning situation into a problem. You are just, *oh! wow!* It empties your mind out but you still see. You have the revelation but you're not doing anything with it. So I hope that gives you some indication of awareness.

Being aware inside the truth

May all beings in the three realms be aware of the truth of the ineffable base!

The base, the source, can't be expressed, but may everyone be aware INSIDE the truth, not aware OF it. What is the difference? Because as soon as I want to be aware of my buddha nature, I want to be aware of my mind and by introducing this idea I have introduced the paradigm of subject and object. This is why this text say again and again, *Shhhh*. You can't speak it, you can't say it.

As soon as you start to conceptualise it, you tear the world into subject and object, inside and outside, good and bad, right and wrong, liking and not liking. The polarities start mushrooming out. That's why I translated it as 'be aware IN the truth'. You are awakened INTO the truth; you are not aware OF it as something out there, but the truth comes to you. For example, if you have a bath and you put the water in a bath, you might test the temperature with your hand but then you get in. The skin on the other parts of your body has a different sensitivity to your hand, so you have the truth of the temperature of the water on your body... *ooh! It's a bit hot!* It's direct and immediate and you got it. This is the sense of the non-dual. I am not thinking about it, it COMES. It's like instant intuitive presence. We will look at this more.

Alternative descriptions of the ground

So now we will look at ground from a different description. There are thousands of Tibetan texts describing the ground and each author brings out slightly different flavours. Why? Because you can't describe it. Each author is doing their best to present a little bit of how it is.

A Tibetan example is somebody who has lived in a country where they don't have anything sweet. He asks someone who comes from a country, like India, where they have all kinds of sweets and fruits, *What is sweet?* He is told, *it's in your tongue, it's in your mouth when you eat something sweet.* He says, *I don't understand!* So you can explain and explain but he still doesn't understand. Then you take a little piece of sugar and you put it on the person's tongue. *Oh! that's sweet.* You say, *Okay, now you know what is sweet, so you explain to me what it is?* And he says, *I don't know how to!* This is the meaning of direct experience: you have the taste but you can't say what it is. What does a lemon taste like? How do you know that this coffee is better than that coffee? *Well, it just tastes great!* What do you mean by 'it tastes great'? Whoa! you can't say anything! This is why you get many different descriptions: because everybody is trying to say the unsayable.

Nature of dzogchen transmission

This is important for us because, as many of you are aware, the first transmission of dzogchen teachings in this world was from the mind of Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha.

Samantabhadra is just sitting, completely open and relax. Also present is Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva means 'vajra being', completely indestructible, like the sky. He is completely pure and open like the sky. So too is Samantabhadra; there is no real difference between them so their minds have no barrier. There is no one finite buddha here and another finite buddha there. They are instantly immediately connected. This is the first transmission and it is called the transmission of buddha's mind. Mind to mind transmission.

Then from this, you have the so-called symbolic transmission in which there is gesture (mudra). Buddha Samantabhadra is usually depicted naked with his hands in his lap, relaxed; he is not doing anything with them. Vajrasattva is holing a vajra and a bell. He is holding a bell on his left thigh and the vajra in front of his heart. This is a gesture which symbolises something. So if you see that image, or if you were to meet Samantabhadra and he made this gesture (mudra) which is the root of all the mudras, you get something. This is the symbolic transmission. It's a non-conceptual transmission of how it is and you wake up on seeing that.

Garab Dorje, who did understand the symbolic transmission, manifested into this world out of compassion but he realised that people don't directly get how they are because we are locked inside our concepts. So he gave the transmission which is described as 'coming through the ear hole'. It's an oral transmission, using words. Because we are used to words, we receive a transmission but unfortunately words are linked to concepts and concepts are always interpreted. So although Garab Dorje speaks very clearly when we hear the words, the transmission gets a little bit bent by our understanding.

If you study dharma you will learn about the three pot faults. We learn that we shouldn't be like upturned pot which can't allow anything inside. We shouldn't be like a pot with a hole in it, so that what we hear just doesn't drain out of us. And we shouldn't be like a pot with dirty old food in it because if old food is mixed with new fresh food, then we get something not very nourishing. This third pot fault is a difficult one. How do we clean our pot so that our own memories and understandings and opinions don't get mixed in with dharma! This is almost impossible. If we have a lot of education then that may be useful but it may also be a problem.

Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche said that teaching dharma in the west is very different from teaching it in Tibet because western people have a lot of education, a lot of experience of life in different ways. Our mind is quick and can link across many things which can be an advantage but it can also be a problem, because thinking is linking and so we build our patterns. Do our patterns have a true and authentic dharma vibration? Possibly not, which is why in this third transmission, when the dharma is taught in language, we try to receive it, if possible, without thinking.

He would also say not to take any notes when he was teaching. Anyway the teaching was recorded, so you could hear it again, but that wasn't the main point. The main point is, as soon as you take notes, you are in selectivity. You say, *oh! this is important, I need to write it down in case I forget.* So instead of being there in the flow, you are picking and mixing and making your own pattern.

The flow is important because, as Samantabhadra says, everything arises from the same source. Awareness and unawareness have the same source. Fundamentally, unawareness is not bad and awareness is not good. There is no difference between them. If you see that, your mind will collapse. Salt and sugar, are they same? *No!* Yes! Taste! What is sweet, what is salty? Same! Ahh!

So this is the key point. Don't discriminate. Don't enter into judgement. Don't allocate value, since value will always be according to some pattern you have established, be it your family culture, your national culture, your educational culture, your work culture, your sexual orientation culture or your gender culture. We have so many biases. We say, *From my point of view, this is important. As a heterosexual white middle class man, I want to say this...* But it doesn't mean very much, it is just one opinion amongst many.

In dharma transmission, we try to go beyond opinions and go into the flow of sound and emptiness. Sound and emptiness. That's the nature of transmission and that's why we have many different text which indicate this truth in different ways.

From Chetsangpa: the way of clarity and the way of bewilderment

This is from a lama called Chetsangpa. There is a difficult term, it's called 'ne-lug' [Tib. gNas Lugs]. 'Ne' means to abide or to settle and 'lug' means the style or the fashion; it means: like how it is, how it is in itself. And when you don't get it, don't get 'how it is', then you have the way of bewilderment.

So this is the way of clarity, this is how it is when you see 'how it is'. This is the source he is talking about: this means your own mind is sitting here. Wherever you are sitting, whatever you see around you, however you feel in your body, whatever you think of yourself as a good person or a bad person, whatever – it is your own mind. The mind itself is not the busy functioning of your consciousness; it is this intrinsic awareness, this brilliance of your mind and this is primordial. It's there from the very beginning. Just there. It's uncontrived. It's not created.

Each of us has a personality and that personality develops as we grow older. It is contrived; personality is contrived. You come into your shape. If you grew up with brothers and sisters, how come you are not like them? *How is this possible that we are so different.* It's because you are contrived. You adapted through the positioning of different aspects of your experience.

Awareness is effortlessly arising, 'lhun-drub' [Tib. Lhun Grub], sometiomes referred to as instant presence or instant manifestation. This is our mind, it's pure. This is primordial purity. It's never contaminated, never mixed with anything, just here open, fresh and it's effortlessly arising, everything coming at once. What you see around you, what you hear, what you taste, the taste in your mouth, the pain in your back, how your feet are, *I need to take my shoes off*— whatever is arising for you, it's just here. You turn your head, it's just here. Everything is instant. It's all-at-once-ness, IMMEDIACY. Your mind from the very beginning is instantly filled. When you look for your mind, you can't catch it, it's empty. But it's full. EMPTY and FULL.

Primordial purity and instant (effortless) presence – these two are not two different ideas, they are inseparable. So this is something we can be aware of.

Practice: stay with what you see

This Zoom talk will be finishing soon and then you will get up and do something; maybe you will eat, or talk to someone or go to toilet... whatever you are doing every movement of your body is a new revelation. You open the door, you go out into the passageway, IT'S THERE! From ordinary material point of view, you may think, *I am here and it's my flat, so I know which room is where; I know the layout and I know...* Now you are in your mental construction. But just relax a little bit and allow the co-emergence of experience. Don't split it into 'I', the subject, see this, the object. Relax from that. *Oh! Moving! Revealing! The pulsations!* As the body is moving, what it sees arises in front of us.

If you look for yourself, you see that you live in a world of revelation. Moment by moment everything is revealing itself. Later you will go out of your flat and start to walk in street; you can't know what's going to be there. You might know what's in your flat but once you are out in the street— cars are parked in new places, someone is out taking their dog for a late night walk... There are people in the street; look at how they walk— all this is showing to you. Everything is showing. Showing means light. Light is shining, your inner world of light. What you see is light. What you BELIEVE you see is interpretation. Stay with what you see; that is immediate, that is primordial. That is first.

Our interpretation comes after the fact but because we are so skilled in interpretation, we merge interpretation onto perception and the two seem to be completely fixed together. So it's very difficult to focus, and to pull our thinking back. But we have to do that! The visual appearances are arising, the conceptual appearances are arising, and these are movements together. Their interplay is our conceptual understanding of what is happening.

So the more we relax and the more we allow them to move, they just very gently show that this is an interplay. The thought is not first, the perception is slightly ahead of the interpretation because we have to interpret 'something'. When we relax the mind and are being at ease, then we see, O*h*! this and this and this... The concepts are also there but 'this' came first.

That's very important. For example, when you look in a mirror and see your face, you see a reflection. The reflection is in the mirror. You interpret the patterning of the reflection as your face. What you see is illumination inside this frame of the mirror; you see shape and colour, you see pattern of colour. That's what you actually see. And you interpret it as 'my face'.

The difference between awareness and consciousness (Cont'd)

I, Samantabhadra, affirm the truth of the source free of causes and conditions. Awareness is self-arisen on the source itself, untouched by the faults of separating outer and inner, of employing biased judgements, and untainted by the darkness of the loss of recollection and so what occurs is free of faults. Intrinsic awareness is fresh and unchanging. It is free of fear and panic even if the three worlds are destroyed. With the non-duality of appearance and mind, there is no attachment to the pleasures of the five senses. Self-arising awareness is free of concepts and so is free of material form and the five poisons.

Buddhism in general refers to eight consciousnesses. Each of the five senses has its own consciousness and the sixth consciousness, mental consciousness, takes the raw information from the senses, cooks it a bit, and comes to a conclusion. The seventh consciousness is the consciousness of the afflictions the mixed emotions, the mental dullness, aversion, desire, jealousy pride and so on— the many different flavourings that comes into your perception. The eighth consciousness is called 'alaya vijñāna', the ground of all consciousness.

The ground of this consciousness, however, is not the same as this ground that we are talking about in dzogchen. It's more like a kind of receptacle that holds all the possibilities. It is the consciousness which is the ground of all dualistic perception. It is within the field of dualism.

Since these eight consciousnesses operate very quickly they give you the sense that 'I am seeing something'. However when you look in the mirror, you don't actually see anything since a reflection is not 'a thing'. The reflection is very precisely appearance and emptiness. It's illusion. It's just colour in a mirror. *But I know this is my face. Oh! I am seeing my face.* What I am seeing is an image of my face; I can never see my own face directly. I have to look in a photograph or a painting or a mirror to see something that I identify as 'my face'.

The object confirms the subject. This is how our life in samsara is. *The reflection is the truth about me*. I feel from inside something about my face but

now when I look in the mirror, *Oh my God, oh, I look so tired, how come it's possible!* It's something quite amazing to say that 'that' (the reflection) is 'me'. 'That' is not you. But 'that' is me in the sense 'I, me, myself'. 'Me', if you like, is the object vibration and 'I' is the subject vibration.

He said, *that to me*. 'I' received his comment. 'I' was the object that 'he' was speaking about. He said, *James why did you do that, I don't like it when you do that, oh my God!* He was speaking to me. 'I' was the object addressed by 'he' who was the subject in the moment. I didn't like what he said to me. 'I', the subject didn't like to be the object onto which 'he' is sticking these negative remarks. This is very important.

The inner duality is between 'I' and 'me', between 'self as subject' and 'self as object'. When you see yourself as object, you can tell a story about yourself. Where are you from, your favourite food, the best holiday you have ever had, all kind of things— there is always a lot to say from the point of view of 'me'. We talk in terms of 'I' – *when I was there on my holiday, I had a really good time*. Who was the 'I'? The 'I' that I describe being on the holiday is not the 'I' who is speaking now. This 'I' is filling with the expression of the pattern of concepts which would indicate a memory of where I was. 'I' is always empty. 'I' fills with 'ME'. 'ME' is the filling of 'I'.

'I', 'I am', 'I am hungry'. I am tired, I am happy, I am playful, I am bored – 'I' will fill with anything. Because 'I' is empty. The emptiness of the self is present in every moment of our speaking, in every moment of our thinking.

So this 'I' is where you feel *rigpa* illuminating the present moment because if 'I' had a fixed content, it could never be fresh. The real quality of 'I' is that it is fresh and 'ME' is stale. 'ME' is like an old bread. In Germany, it's a tradition to make dumplings with old bread. This is quite nice, winter is coming, it's getting cold and damp, some big bowl with hot dumplings inside is very good. But fresh bread is different, the smell is so nice that you wouldn't want to make a dumpling. 'I' is fresh.

When you're looking for this ground, for this primordial openness, the freshness of the mind is revealed to you. You can try that for yourself. We're

going to finish very soon and so when you get up, you can say, *I am going to make a cup of tea, or I am going to lie down, I am going to read something, I am going talk with someone, I... Now I am talking. Now I am walking. Now I am cooking. Now I am reading.* Filling and emptying. 'I' fills and empties. If you really catch the flavour of 'I', it's truly like the mirror.

The mirror has no fixed content. The mirror takes a content, such as 'I am tired', and 'I' fills and empties. Fills and empties. 'ME' is like the ocean-bed, it takes the accretion of whatever is sinking to the bottom. Like the layers of sludge, the plastic refuge of western culture is sinking down. This is 'ME' layered with my history, 'my pain', 'my suffering'. It's not great.

However 'I' is fresh. This is what you can examine for yourself. Then the meaning of awareness becomes clear. The naked 'I' is awareness. The heavy, dense, predictive 'ME' is consciousness. In your own experience, you can start to see the difference between these two. Stay with the light of the fresh, the immediate. And watch how you can settle into the density of assumptions.

So now we will end for this evening and for those of us who meet again tomorrow we will progress through looking at the ground, the path and the result as well as the view, the meditation, the activity and the result. And now I say, *Good night!*

October 9, 2020. Lecture 1 of 3

Good morning everyone.

What we call the ground or the base or the foundation or the source is in fact our own condition. It's not something far away from us, it's not that we have come from somewhere else into samsara – rather, this base is how we manifest. We are the manifestation of the ground. Yesterday we were looking at the key point, which is whether we are aware of the open empty ground, of how we manifest moment by moment, or we are unaware of it. If we are unaware of it then we become caught up in our own ideas about how the world is.

Losing Contact With the Ground

So, now we'll look a little at what happens when we lose contact with the ground. There are two aspects of this: 1) how this lack of contact with the ground arises before there is any sense of a person and 2) how the contact with the ground arises as a person.

Now we are in a body; we have our own history, we have our assumptions and our beliefs, and this is always our starting point. When you look at it from the point of view that because of the depth of our ignorance we have been wandering in samsara for many many lives, and that this depth of ignorance has been there from the very beginning, then it looks like a kind of metaphysical speculation. It looks like a way of trying to make sense of everything.

I'll speak now a little bit to show how that reading operates. It only really starts to ring true when we think, *this applies to me, this is the story of me.* It's not the story of the birth of modern Germany, or the birth of the European Union. We can't layout the facts about how this all came together – first there were these contracts negotiated and then this and then that happened...

No, the fact is that actually we are always on a crossroad. The ground is the ground of both openness and closure, of awareness and unawareness. This continues all the time. If you see the ground, you have openness, fresh

awareness, and infinite connectivity. If you don't see the ground, you have the imagined basis of the self and whatever we construct from that.

Ignoring is a process, with four aspects

1) Not seeing the open unborn ground & starting to perceive separate entities

Generally speaking 'ignoring' is a process; it's not really a state of ignorance but is an ongoing activity. It can be described as having four aspects.

The first is the ignoring of the ground which arises with the sudden intensification of the idea of something existing by itself. So generally speaking, because the ground is open, it is unborn and unceasing. It doesn't have any limit to it, so it's not locked in a box to be kept safe. It's open like the sky or open like the ocean and there is movement.

The ground, our basis, is stillness itself but don't understand this stillness as being in opposition to movement. Normally we live in a world of polarities. We have high and low, hot and cold, still and moving. If something is moving, it's not still. If something is still, it's not moving. We see in terms of either/or, either it's this or it's that. The ground, however, is free of all such polarities.

The stillness of the ground and the seeming movement of the ground (i.e. the display of all experience of samsara and nirvana) are inseparable because samsara and nirvana appear without reality, appear without becoming something. Likewise the ceaseless display of the energy of the unborn ground also doesn't become born. For example, you live in your body. You have a birth certificate, maybe hidden in a drawer someplace; you have a date of your birth and you probably celebrate your birthday every year. You began when you came out of your mother's body, the umbilical cord was cut and doctor said, *oh! this baby is alive* when you then started to breathe. You were born, you were born out of your mother into the world. Your mother was living in the world, so when you were inside your mother's body you were in your mother's body which was in the world. When you came out of her body, you came into that world which you had already been in when you were inside her body.

We are always in the space of becoming. All movement is inside the open still space of possibility. Although you are born from your mother, you are unborn. Because what does it mean to be born? Inside your mother's body, you are a process unfolding. You can now see incredible pictures of foetuses developing and all the different stages they go through, then they come out of the body. If you are going to live, what is happening? The lungs are working, the heart is working, there is movement. Life is movement. Where is the movement? It's in the space of possibility. For example, if the nose didn't work and the mouth didn't work, the baby would die because the air has to come in and go out. You are movement.

All the moments of your life can be categorised in stages – when I was a baby, when I was a small child, when I went to school, when I got my first relationship etc. You can categorise yourself into periods of your life but actually your life has been a flow of experience. When you tell the story of your life, you emphasise certain aspects of your story and you construct a narrative of who you take yourself to be. That narrative is a communication with other people, that is to say it is a movement, it doesn't establish anything. We are movement. We are the movement of the unborn open empty space.

This first level of ignorance is: the sense of something being there which is other than the non-duality or the integrity of stillness and movement. The movement is concretised. For example, in the summertime, you may go to your freezer because it's very hot and you want some ice cubes. You see that you don't have any ice cubes, so you take the little tray out, you turn on the tap, you fill the tray and you put it back in the freezer. Two hours later you can take it out and now you have ice cubes. The ice cube is not different essentially from the water that was flowing out of the tap. When the water was flowing, it was changing its shape moment by moment as it descended into the bottom of the sink and down the plug hole. But now when you catch it in your little plastic tray, it takes on the shape of the compartment in the tray. The very first moment of ignorance is like this.

There is movement but the movement is thickened, just like the way if you watch ice forming on the top of the little compartment, you get a thin layer and

then it thickens down into the centre. It's like looking at a little puddle on the road in winter time, you get very thin ice and as the winter deepens the ice gets thicker until it's solidified.

So ignorance forms like ice. Ice takes on a shape; it's brittle and if you drop it, it fragments into different pieces. This is our sense of our world, it's made up of fragments of many many many different things. This process begins with this first movement of one thing, just one thing, and it's called *'dag nyid chig pu'* [Tib. bDag Nyid gCig Pu] 'Dag' means I or thing or it. 'Nyid' indicates itself, it itself, this thing. 'Chig po' means solitary or alone. This isolated entity is cut off from the flow by ignoring the inseparability of the flow and the ground.

We can link this over to our practice. When you're sitting in meditation, you become aware of sensations coming and going in the body, thoughts, feelings, memories and so on. On a good day when you feel relaxed, it's just a lot of stuff coming and going, coming and going, not very important. Sometimes we get a little bit obsessed; we get drawn into identification with the form of what is occurring. When we merge into that form, it becomes an object of our consideration.

For example, now in England, it's a damp autumn day, a month or so ago we had hot beautiful shiny mornings. So if I'm sitting in practice, maybe suddenly a memory of the summer arises in my mind, Oh! There is some affective connection to that: 'That was a good day, I enjoyed the summer, the summer is better than now.' So when I'm thinking about the summer, I'm thinking about something that isn't there. I'm thinking about the thought of the summer. Thoughts link to thoughts. Even in the summer, when you meet a friend in the street and you might say, *hey! what a wonderful day,* what are you doing? The day itself is so complicated with the light in the trees, the cars going by, children talking and so on. Thousands and thousands of momentary events shining and blossoming together and you say it's a wonderful day. So you put a kind of conceptual wrapper around this infinite diversity and you make a conclusion. Then the next day you can tell another friend, *oh! yesterday was so wonderful, it was amazing weather.* Now what does the weather mean, in the morning it was different from midday, midday was different from the evening. But you are

condensing, you are making a distillation – like taking and pressing grapes, getting the juice, making some wine, distilling that rough wine into brandy – you're going through stages till you have the intensity of the sip of brandy and this is like the yesterday that was so wonderful. PHAT! You get a hit but yesterday was made up more of little grapes, little moments bubbling up and down.

In this first level of ignorance we believe that when we describe something being there, we are telling the truth. We believe that we describe self-existing entities. We don't see that we invent, we create, we generate what we believe in.This is a form of ignorance that is in bad faith with ourselves. If you see the moment that is occurring, if you see it directly, it arises and passes. Arises and passes. But when you wrap it in your interpretation, your assumption, your belief and your conviction that it is like that in itself I'm actually inventing this. For me, it's a beautiful day because the sun is shining. For someone else who, for example, is driving on the way to hospital because their child has had a lifechanging accident at school, for them it's not a beautiful day. So this wonderful vast conclusion I have about the day, is actually describing my relationship with the day according to my frame of reference.

In that way, we can see that freezing an experience to make it graspable is an extrapolation; it's the creation of pseudo entities. These are not real entities but they become real because we believe in them. In Tibetan they say, *dag dzin* [Tib. bdag 'dzin]– 'dzin' means to grasp, to hold, to take hold of something. On a beautiful summer day when you're out walking there are so many things happening that you can't take hold of it because each moment is passing. But when you say, *it's a beautiful day, it's a wonderful day,* it is as if you have got hold of the day, as if you've been able to hold it to you and to describe it.

A key thing is that ignorance is:

- not seeing the open unborn ground
- starting to perceive separate entities
- believing that the separate entities are real, that is to say that they have inherent existence, they exist in themselves, of themselves, out of themselves.
- developing a narrative on top of that, commenting on it, allocating value.

By activating the five poisons of mental dullness of not seeing the luminous quality of what appears we then have aversion, desire, pride, jealousy and so on. The first level of ignorance is the living belief in entities.

2) Co-emergent ignorance: separating subject and object

The second level of ignorance, co-emergent ignorance, is called '*lhanchig kyépé ma rigpa*' [Tib. Lhan gCig sKyes Pa'i Ma Rig Pa]. It is when subject and object go separate. When you see your shoes or your favourite teacup, you see a thing; you don't think, *I believe these are my shoes.* You just say, *these are my shoes.* So in that way we don't see that we are making an interpretation about these shoes as being mine. I take it for granted that the 'my shoe-ness' of the shoe is in 'the shoe' rather than in my mind, just as when you come out of your mother's body and the the umbilical cord was cut and now the baby is separate. When I say, *these are my shoes,* they're out there in the world as 'my shoe'. I have cut the connection between my mind and the shoe.

Co-emergent ignorance means that the thinness, or the transparency or the lucidity of this appearance, is present at the same time as the thickening. The thickening is arising by my addition of interpretations, ideas and so on. Both are present at the same time. Both possibilities are there. You could turn towards the thinning lucidity of the transparency of the moment, or you could turn towards the thickening of adding concepts.

For example, in Britain just now they're building a supposedly faster railway to go from London to Manchester. In order to do this, they have to lay train tracks through some old forests. There are people who want to protect the forest so they climb up into the trees and make little houses there to stop the contractors from cutting the trees down. The contractors believe that they will make money from cutting the trees down, so they are on the side of progress and they say that the eco-activists are against the economy of the country. The eco-activists say that this is a very rare forest, you're going to destroy what's growing here, so don't do it.

What's there is there. There are some trees. The trees are neither voting for modernity nor voting for the daffodils and the wild flowers that grow around

them. They are just trees coming out of the earth, touching the sky, breathing in and out, doing their photosynthesis and so on. It is us who give whatever value to the tree. We make it as a symbol for something else, for modernity or climate change or a fight against capitalist exploitation. Such things occur all the time in our political and economic life. We start to see that *oh! this is the play of beliefs*. These are opinions, these are not truths. There is no fundamental basis because these are movements of energy arising in and from and as emptiness. They're just opinions, just ideas.

Everyone is a playwright, everyone is their own William Shakespeare developing tragedies and comedies of their existence and each believing in their own drama. So this is the second level of ignorance: where you could relax and open, or you can make it very very real.

You might believe that it's very important to share things, that people should share and support each other. You go on your bicycle to visit a friend and you find out that you forgot to bring your chain to lock your bicycle however you think, *I'll only be in only for 10 minutes!* When you come out, your bicycle is gone. Someone has shared your bicycle! *That's beautiful! I like to share, I believe in sharing – you* don't quite feel like that. You think, *what! someone has stolen my bicycle. Phone the police,* you're crying, *criminals! bad people!* But sharing is important for you? In ways like this we start to see that we have thin beliefs (like 'let's share') and we get very thick beliefs (like 'MY BICYCLE'). When this level of ignorance is arising, it feeds into the sense of the importance of events and this feeds the next aspect which is the naming and categorising of everything that occurs.

Naming is the pattern of ignoring the ground, and operates as the integration of phenomena into language. When you walk in the country, maybe you see lots of things growing, you don't know very much about plants. So you just think, *whoa! beautiful countryside, so many things growing here.* Or, you could have your little handbook, *The Wild Flowers of Germany.* So now you're looking up page 42, *oh! it's a kind of orchid, do you know its name? Let me tell you its Latin name.* Now we really know what this is. So in that way you have the possibility, you just see and say, *beautiful.* When you see this beautiful flower

there's nothing more to do – *beautiful.* That's enough. But once you give it a name, and you put it in its family, and read how rare it is, then you look at it again because now the name gives you a way to weave more relationship with this thing that you now 'know' about.

This is a very important distinction in all schools of buddhism but especially in dzogchen: the difference between 'knowing' – that is to say having the experience of the revelation of the object, seeing it is there, the most simple direct form of knowing— and the 'knowing' that comes about when I tell the object what it is.

So, someone has written *The Wild Flowers of Germany*. I have this book with me and look up this particular flower. I check the picture, *oh*, *yes it is this*. Now the flower becomes more real for me, more important, more valid because I am able to name it. That is to say the name of the flower and the presence of the flower become merged together. This is the tulip. This is a wild crocus. This is a lily. Oh! it's a lily, wow! yeah! lilies! I love lilies. But you liked it before you knew it was called a lily however now you say, *I love lilies*. All the lilies you have ever met gather together and dance around this little wild lily and they say, *welcome sister, come and be with us, you are a lily oh! how lovely!*

In that way this little thing growing in the field is being thickened by your associations. This is an illustration of the fourth of the five skandhas in which knowledge is injected into the object and is then taken to be the truth of the object. By the separation of the appearance from the ground, you then have the arising of subject and object as two separate things.

3) Taking an interpretation of a phenomenon as the inherent truth of it

From the subject side, you project information into the object and take it to be the truth of the object. All politics is based on this, a naming and a definition. Once you have enough political power, you can rename anything.

These days there is a conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia about who owns a narrow land strip. In the Middle East there seem to be continuous wars about land. In many many countries across the world somebody says this piece of land is ours and other people disagree and say it is theirs. This is world politics all the time. It's about the power of naming and realising that the one who names, steals.

The anarchist slogan is 'all property is theft'. When the British went to Australia, Australia became British, never mind all the people who had been living there for thousands of years before. The same in America. The same with slavery and with patriarchy. For many years people were bullied into believing these things and now with the rise of anti-colonialism and feminism we have a different interpretation.

The key thing to see on this level of ignorance is that an interpretation -a way of talking about something, a way of using that linguistic form - is taken to be the description of something with an inherent truth. That is to say, the situational or contingent meaning or value, the value that arises in the moment of the situation is taken as a sign of some inner essence that guarantees it in some way.

So under old patriarchy you could say, women are not as intelligent as men, therefore you shouldn't educate girls because educated girls just cause trouble. So you educate the boys and then it's obvious that boys know more than girls. That is the proof, the definite proof, boys are more intelligent than girls because they know more than girls. That's why we shouldn't educate girls. We see this as an insane logic but insane logic is popular in all power systems where you get lied to and cheated because in order to hold on to power, you have to distort the actuality of the world.

Yesterday we touched on evenness, equanimity. We explored how the ground is the source of all in samsara and all in nirvana, that everything has the same source, the same intrinsic value, and that it is inseparable from emptiness.

However when you start to apply concepts to objects that you take to be self-existing, then you don't see evenness. It's like a huge volcanic eruption, like a movement of the tectonic plates. If one tectonic plate is subjectivity and the other is objectivity, these grind together and you have the emergence of the Himalayas of conceptualisation with peaks and valleys and hidden corners. This is our culture where all kinds of dishonesty are in place but because we believe in them, we take them to be true. Actually everything has equal value because it's the radiance of the mind itself. But if you wrote that in an exam at school, you would fail. If you stood on your street corner and told everyone who passed that *everything is equal*, people would laugh at you because they don't believe everything is equal. When you go shopping you notice that some tomatoes look delicious and others not so delicious. Salad tomatoes don't require any cooking but you can get big solid tomatoes which have a tough skin if they are not cooked and don't taste very nice but you cook them for a bit then they become delicious, and you can enjoy them with some salt, pepper and oil.

So all tomatoes are not the same. All apples are not the same. All people are not the same. This is what arises with the power of naming. We don't see that all tomatoes emerge from the ground, that without the earth, without some possibility of some basis of growing, they are not going to occur. Likewise all sentient beings have a potential to learn. The culture we grow in determines what doors open or close to us. There are many countries in the world where girls still don't go to school, people prefer not to have educated women. So this is a cultural bias; it's not seeing boys and girls are equal. This is the third level of ignorance. You can observe it for yourself all the time.

For example, now that elections are coming and decisions are being made about the different economic zones in Germany, you see that some areas do better than others, some have more industry than others. Should you then say that people who live in a more prosperous area should be rewarded by having more money than people who live in a less prosperous area? How shall we live as a democracy? Now we have equalising tax systems and social support systems to try to balance a little bit what goes on because if you believe in democracy, then having some very very wealthy people and some very poor people is not so good.

But in the last 40 years, capitalism has created both multibillionaire people and many very poor people. Mr. Gates who made his money by taking a lot for himself and exploiting others by not paying them very well, has now become very very wealthy and has opened the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation "committed to tackling the greatest inequities in our world." Having exploited people, he now wants to help people. This is how people behave. Who is good, who is bad? It depends. It is an interpretation.

4) Dullness of not understanding 'karma'

The fourth level of ignorance is the ignorance of the dullness or the cloudiness of not understanding karma. Karma is very important in all buddhist schools. Some people say, *oh! in dzogchen you don't need to have any understanding of karma.* If you are permanently aware, if you are living in the bright freshness of *rigpa*, you don't need to think about karma but for most of us our sense of awareness comes and goes, sometimes it's more clear and sometimes it's less clear. When it's less clear, then you have karma.

The word 'karma' means activity, action, doing. Doing means subject, verb, object: I want to help you, I want to steal from you, I want to kill you, I want to save your life. You are there, I am here, I am going to act on you, towards you, for you, according to my intention.

For a karmic act to be fully powerful, there are **four factors** which need to be present. The first is called the ground or basis. This is not the ground we've been talking about. The basis of karma, its starting point, is **our belief in entities**. It refers to this first form of ignorance that we were looking at: something exists, object exists, subject exists. Duality is the basis of karma because without duality you can't form an intention.

This afternoon if the weather is good I will go for a walk. So 'this afternoon' which is an abstract concept becomes something I can think about. 'The weather' which is also always changing, I formulate as 'If it's good, I will go for a walk.' There are concrete objects and there are conceptual objects.

If I have the thought to steal from you and **I intend to do** it then that is 'you for me'. You become the object of my intention to take your money. So I notice that you have gone out, maybe to the kitchen or to the toilet, and in that moment when you're out of the room I go in, open your bag, open your purse and I take out 200 euros. I put them in my pocket and it's now mine. So, you exist; I see that you have money; I want to have your money; I take your money. The object (you) and my intention come together. This is the first and the second stage.

When you go out of the room and I take the money this is the union – the meeting between my intention and the object. I did it. Now I have your money. You come back into the room and you say, *It has been nice meeting you again, James, I'm going home now* and I say, *Okay, yeah let's meet again* and off you go. You don't realise until later that you've lost the money. In the evening you phone me and ask, *James, I don't know what happened. I looked in my purse my money's gone, I wonder where it went.* I say, *Oh! these things happen. Maybe when you were in the street… These foreign pickpockets are so good…* Now I'm very happy; I am glad I have done it. I have got away with it. I have not been detected. So I am fully committed to the deception of stealing from you.

When the above four stages are in place we say that this has the power of karma. That is to say, that there is an unimpeded intention 'ME' first. *I must win I don't care about you*. Subject should dominate object. *I am for myself not for you*. No sharing, no equanimity. I am not sorry, in fact I may even be laughing at you since you're so stupid that you didn't realise that I took your money. I have a kind of Schadenfreude, a joy at your distress. As well as having your money, as well as feeling successful. All of this creates a kind of energetic charge which exists in the stream of my conscious being and has some unconscious elements as well.

In Tibetan, it's called 'gyud' [rGyud] or in Sanskrit 'santana'. It means the stream of your life experience. So if I've stolen from you, now I think, *hey! this is good. I can make a lot of easy money stealing. I don't have to work. I just have to look at stupid people in the street and take their money.* Of course if I'm starting to think, *these are stupid people. Look, they don't even watch their bag* then my mind is already turning towards the other person as an idiot. Instead of thinking, *these poor people, they're not very careful, they're not mindful, they don't seem to realise that there are thieves around.* my vision is tilted. Now I believe that I am a thief and you are stupid because I can see where your money is.

In terms of of karma, I have an alteration in my interpretation of events and I continue in this pattern and it builds up a kind of momentum – a charge of energy and orientation of intention – which manifests in my repeated activity. These tendencies go with me when I die.

Think about when you see small children or babies. It's pretty obvious that they are very different. At one year of age the personality of a small child is already showing itself. Some children are very brave, some are very anxious, some cry a lot, some are very friendly, some learn to talk and engage easily, others go very quiet and don't want to participate. These are the karmic tendencies which are arising in the person. The family then responds to the tendencies in the child. So the karma is not just in the child and its potential. Their parents are also their karma because how your parents are becomes the environment that allows the manifesting of certain aspects of your potential and the quietening or the dampening of other aspects of your potential.

Karma emerges in the interaction of subject and object of self and the environment. Some people are very poor when they're young and they decide to work hard. Some people are very poor and they become depressed and despairing. Some become deceitful and cheaters and feel entitled to exploit other people. You can't simply say that poverty does this or that. External factors are always interacting with the potential of the individual and people will respond in different ways. There are children of very rich people who become cruel and selfish; they already have plenty of money but they decide to exploit others.

When you look at yourself, at your own family, at the people you know, you can see all this operating. *Oh yes, these tendencies were there in that person when they were very young and they were developed*. Then you might think, *Oh! it's a shame that they went to that school, that school was not good for them, that was a sports school. It was pushing a lot of competitive activity and they're not competitive. They should have gone to a school that was more focused on art and creativity.* If you come into an environment that doesn't suit you, it can be very difficult.

Nowadays in our culture we have a lot of choice. A hundred years ago, if you lived in a village near coal mines or steel works or farmland you would do what your father did. You did what the generations of your family had been doing. If you grew up on a farm, you would be a farmer. If your father was a miner, you would go down the mine. Now we have much more freedom and sometimes it is not so obvious how environmental forces influence us.

Karma is complicated

If you remember yesterday, we looked at how the ground has no bias. Good things arise and bad things arise. Good and bad are a judgment; they are not inherent in the ground.

We live in a complex world. Exploitation and cruelty come into the world. People earn their living by making and using weapons. The directors of Krupp's had nice big houses surrounded by parkland. They sent their children to have nice experiences in life. They were good, kind and caring people who also made weapons for killing other people. This is why karma is complicated. Rich, happy and powerful people can make their money doing very very bad things. Poor people can also do very bad things. You cannot determine from the outside how someone is.

This is why when we look at ourselves, when we see ourselves in meditation, we realise how complex we are. We have a good intention, – we recite, *may all beings be happy* – and yet we have pride, we have jealousy, we have desire, we have anger, we have irritation. So we are complex. Why are we complex? Because, as we looked yesterday, 'I', the first person singular, is empty of its own content.

Different experiences arise into the bright space of 'I' and in that moment, we can identify with different feelings, sensations, behaviour. *I can be selfish, I can be generous.* How is this possible? Because selfishness and generosity both arise due to causes and conditions. Some people are generous when they're in the company of big powerful people whom they want to impress but then when they're in a different situation, maybe with poor powerless people, they can be very mean.

According to the situation, according to my tendency, according to my sense of the likelihood of getting caught, this pattern arises and that pattern arises. That's why, we can never define other people and we can never define ourselves. We are complex. We are beyond grasping.

The meaning/value is not inherent in the object

This takes us back to what we looked at yesterday – that the mind is beyond expression; you cannot catch it. Even in terms of our personality, no one can catch us because we have many different valencies or energetic charges or tendencies. To define and reduce people to just one thing, is a violence. We may say that all Scottish people are mean or all Italians are wonderful lovers or that people with red hair have hot tempers. We have all kind of cultural fantasies about nationalities and people. These are not true and can lead to murders. When Europe had religious wars, we would say that all catholics were bad or all protestants were bad and on the basis of someone being a catholic or a protestant they had to die. Their faith is just one band of someone's existence however in times of turmoil, membership of one group becomes the defining truth of who someone is. It is the only important thing that you need to know about them to decide if they are a friend or an enemy? If you're an enemy, I'm going to try to kill you.

There you can see this third level of ignorance operating: the naming becomes the truth of the person.

Nowadays we are not sure whether the Russians are friends or enemies? Is China a friend or enemy? If we go to war with China, then it's enemy. If we go to trade with China, it's friend. It's like that. Some years ago, people had stickers of the Tibetan flag on their cars with 'Free Tibet' written on it. Now you don't see it so often. Why? Because European countries are building trade relationships with China and don't want to actively support Tibetan independence. China takes it as an insult and a provocation and interference with China's internal policies. This is why, we always come back to examining impermanence. All of these factors are dynamic, they are movement, they are energy, they are not truth. Are the Chinese good or bad? IT DEPENDS. That means relative truth or conventional truth. According to the situation, meaning and value is allocated. This meaning is not inherent or intrinsic in the object. The Chinese are neither good nor bad. No one is fully bad. No one is fully good. This is dependent origination: on the basis of this that arises. On the basis of one thing – let's say cheap imports— China is good. On the basis another thing – let's say China stealing industrial secrets – Good or bad? IT DEPENDS!

The idea of an individual self is a construct

This is very very important because what it means is that in samsara, this realm of inter-dependence, there is no solid ground to stand on. Everything shifts according to circumstances. We just need to read your own national history. Every country's history shows these things very very clearly – who is friend, who is enemy. Friends become enemies, enemies become friends just as the Buddha said. There is no inherent truth or existence in any definition.

For meditators this is very important because it means that conceptual understanding is like half a bridge. It takes you halfway across; you can't go the whole distance. It's important to study the dharma and get some intellectual clarity. The first stage is **hearing**, then the second stage is **reflecting**. So you apply what you have learned to the world, to your own experience so that it becomes massaged into you. And the third is **meditating**, so that you awaken to it.

In the meditation, we're not relying on concepts. Everything we know in this world is relative truth so from the point of view of dzogchen, when we are under the power of these four aspects of ignorance, we are living a lie. We are living in deception. Even the idea of having an individual self, of who you are, of your personal history, is a construct. It's a construct.

Do you remember coming home from school and your mum asks, *How was school today*? You say, *Okay*! She asks, *What happened*? You say, *Nothing*! Then you go into the next room to see your granny and she asks, *How was school*? You say, *I didn't like it so much, schools not very nice...* Next you see your sister and she asks the same and you don't tell her much either. Then you see your friend, *How was school*? You say, *Oh! whoa! we had a lot of fun, we were laughing at the teacher, we were doing this, we were doing that...* Your description depends on who you are talking to. We know this about ourselves. How could we tell the truth about our day because our day was so rich, so varied, so incredibly riddled with different possibilities that every description is a choice, it's a selection, it's a shaping, a making.

In the telling, I am creating the patterning of my existence. That is to say, existence is not the basis out of which things arise, existence is the product of how we think and talk about experience. If you understand this then you realise that, *I can change my situation.* If I exist – if I am just James from Scotland who's done this and that – then all these factors condition me into being just this. But if I see that all of these experiences have been movements of relatedness, of interaction – that I have emerged in relation to the various range of experiences in my life – then I can change it!

That's why the text we looked at yesterday says that if you are aware of your own ground, of your own basis, your own source, you are a buddha. If you are not aware of your own ground, you are a sentient being wandering in samsara. It is as simple as this.

What we need to see in particular is that the reason why I don't see my own open ground, the reason why I am unaware, is because I believe in these very constructs which I myself have made. I am making the prison that I inhabit. Nobody else is putting me in the prison; I am doing that.

Meditation

Once you assume that you know, you stop looking

This leads us towards meditation.

Ignorance is a very very important thing to become clear about, that it is a process of 'not seeing'. When you think you know, when you assume that you know, you stop looking. You might think that in the place where you live you could walk about with your eyes closed because you know what it's like. That might be possible if nothing is going to change outside. But if you want to be in touch with what is here you have to look and see.

Assumption, that is to say knowledge, is based on abstraction, of taking the mind away from the immediacy of lived experience into a conceptual level. The problem is not the overview from the helicopter of conceptualisation – it is when you hit the ground. If you were to get in a helicopter and fly over the Black Forest here, you'd just see lots and lots of trees. If you had to make an emergency

landing in a little clearing in the forest and then walk out through the forest, you wouldn't know which direction to go. There are a lot of hills, you'd get very tired, you go up and down, you need to cross a stream... *I'm in the middle of the forest, I don't know where to go.*

This is the issue in life and this is very important for meditators. Because in your conceptual existence, by now you'll have been through school, had some education, some experience of life, some work and so on. You know quite a lot. In your helicopter, everything is quite clear. *I know I have to pay my tax, I know that I need to pay all my bills, gas, electricity and so on. I know I need to plan a holiday. And I know how to book a train ticket online. I know I can do a lots of things.* When you get sick and have to go to hospital you don't really know what to do. You're in the bed and the doctor's in charge. All your lifeskill vanishes and you're just a patient waiting for what will happen. The nurse says, The doctor will come tomorrow and explain. You think, *But I'm here now. What's going to happen?* The nurse says, *Don't worry, it'll all be fine.* And you say, *Well, it's easy for you to say it's fine. I'm the one in the bed.* You're the nurse so no, it's not fine (in an anxious tone). It's like being in the forest. Phenomena are occurring, events are occurring and hitting me, I'm not in my helicopter.

That is why some suffering is very useful for meditators. The suffering brings the helicopter down. Instead of being able to think about life and use all your ideas about life, you are now in touch with lived existence. Life is shining through you and you are returned to the primacy of phenomena.

When you live in a conceptual world, you coat phenomena in the conceptual and so you don't have to look at the phenomena. You just rest inside the assumption of the conceptual. It's very important to see that being skilled in concepts – although identifying you as a cultured, educated, intelligent person – becomes a method by which you become stupid. It can means that you stop looking, you stop questioning, since you just know. You know how to do things. You know how to do your own tax return. You think, Oh yeah, I know how to do this, I have a spreadsheet, I do this, I do that. You are competent at assuming. You know how to do something and as long as the structure doesn't change, you do it this year the same way as you did it last year. You don't have to be shocked, *How* *do I do it? How! How!* You just know, *Yes, this is what I do.* In that way, you stop looking, you stop seeing, you don't taste; you just know.

Embedded in the view of dzogchen is that knowledge makes you stupid. That's a very very strange thing to say, that when you know, you don't look! For example, I live in London where there are many museums and concert halls. Tourists come from all over the world to visit these museums, to look at the architecture. I don't do that anymore. Years ago, I went to all the museums but now I think, *I know what's there. There's a very nice Gauguin, if you're going into the middle of town, go to the National Gallery. There's a beautiful Gauguin. I personally haven't looked at it for 30 years but I know it's there. I remember I liked it. So you should go and see it, it's very good. Where is that Gauguin? It's like an idea floating in my mind. If I actually went to the gallery and I stood in front of it and the colours and the shape and the mood of the painting came into me, that's very different from me knowing that a beautiful Gauguin is in a museum somewhere.*

When I tell myself I know about that painting, I'm being stupid because the Gauguin is only real when you see it. You go through the rooms then you see all these wonderful paintings, Cézanne, Monet and so on. Experiencing each of these directly is immediate and transformative. Your breathing changes, the tension in your muscles changes. The idea of the painting doesn't do that.

Dzogchen: direct participation in the unfolding field of experience

In dzogchen, we are concerned with direct experience, direct participation in the unfolding field of experience. Thinking about things is not helpful. However, in a consumer capitalist economy, where we function on the basis of commodification, everything is turned into knowledge. Universities also become factories for generating knowledge. If you teach in a university, you have to publish books and papers every year to show that you are a productive worker in the factory of knowledge. Everything is abstracted. Living experience is very different.

Dudjom Rinpoche often used the traditional example, that you should be like a small child going into a big temple where there are many thangkas and incense and statues. The child thinks, *wow! wow!* That kind of astonishment allows you to receive more. You're astonished out of yourself. Like if you use the syllable PHAT!, then you have the experience of hedewa, of being separated from the conceptual structure and having a moment of direct experience of emptiness. You're shocked out of reliance on conceptual interpretation.

We have to have some sense of ignorance. This ignorance is not something outside of us which is coming on to us; it is our mode of existence. Existence is ignorance. From the very beginning nothing has been born. Nothing is truly existing in itself. We have *ka-dag* [Tib Ka Dag], primordial purity and *llun-drub* [Tib. IHun Grub], effortlessly arising field of luminous display. These two are inseparable. When we see that I exist, you exist, the walls exist, my books exist, this existence is bright experience mediated through the dulling quality of concept. A concept is like a thin curtain or veil. The light coming in from outside is thinned. It is not so powerful when it has to pass through the curtain; it's not bright and fresh and immediate, it's muted, it's transformed, it takes on a coloration. If we see this then the coloration is 'ME'.

Now we will take a break. When we come back we will look at the issues of the path. The path is our meditation practice.

October 9, 2020. Lecture 2 of 3

The Path

Generally a path takes us somewhere. In general buddhist teachings we want the path to take us from samsara to nirvana. There are many different methods to use as the path. We have impermanence, dependent origination, emptiness. We have shamatha and vipassana, that is to say, 'calming the mind' and 'being clear about what arises for the mind'. We have all the paths of tantra that some of you have been following. There are paths of developing good qualities and gathering merit. These are all paths of activity in which you are experiencing yourself in a different way, transforming the density of your experience to make it lighter and more flowing.

The Path in dzogchen

Seeing through the falsity of our own self-structure

The dzogchen path is none of the above; its focus is to see through the falsity of one's own self-structure. I think I exist and my existence seems – for me – to be just there, a given, non-negotiable: *I exist, I exist as me, I have always been me, this is who I am.* So we examine whether this is true.

As I have described, in terms of ignorance in the ground, this is a false structure. This is a structure which comes into place by ignoring the ground and it is held in place by functioning as if there were no open basic ground (which is our source, what we arise from moment by moment). We are sentient beings; we are beings with a mind. We are mind-having creatures who travel in samsara from this place to that place – sometimes happy, sometimes sad, sometimes winning, sometimes losing. There is always something going on, something to react to, to respond to, to sort out. Always something to do.

Remember the fourth aspect of ignorance with karma? It's about activity. We use activity to improve and even transform our situation but because it's an activity operating from subject and object as separate entities, it actually continues the structure of the problem. Even when content of our problem may seem to get easier the basic structure of duality continues.

In dzogchen, we are not concerned to do something or to make something. We sit with the mind as it shows itself and allow the unimpeded movement of experience, while remaining present as an unchanging awareness. This is the dzogchen path.

As soon as you get involved by wanting to have more of one kind of experience and less of another kind of experience, for example, when you get caught by a thought such as *I don't know why I'm so selfish, I need to do more bodhisattva practice and be a nicer person* then when a thought like that arises, you're looking for an antidote to this toxic situation that you find yourself in. Basically you're saying that how you are is no good, which is a judgment. It's imputing some definite enduring badness or wrongness in me which needs some medicine or antidote or intervention to improve it. From the point of view of dzogchen this is ignorance. From the point of view of general buddhism however, it is not ignorance; it is the path.

Different views and different paths

That is why it is so important to understand the meaning of each view, because everything is interpretation, it's not about truth. The only truth is emptiness, everything else is the movement of the mind, of thoughts, sensations, feelings and structures. All the dharma paths are illusion. You don't have to believe me – just read the Heart Sutra. There is no enlightenment, there is no awakening. This is what the Heart Sutra records the Buddha as having said. So what does that mean?

If I feel that I am bad and I want to be better, to be more like other people, what is that? It's comparing and contrasting: *I am like this, they are like that, how they are is better than me.* Is that an accurate description? Is that an ethical appreciation of their good qualities? Or is that a mental fabrication? The first two readings – that it's a proper ethical evaluation of my limitations and bad qualities – belong to mahayana buddhism, where I repent the bad that I've done

and I make a commitment to work for the benefit of other people. However it is not what the view of dzogchen concerns itself with.

The dzogchen view

A view, in buddhism, refers to a way of seeing which illuminates the possibilities of the situation. The general paths in buddhism assume an acceptance of duality: *I am real, you are real, everything in my world is real and I need to free myself from this entrapment.* Therefore, there is something to do.

The dzogchen view operates on the basis that from the very beginning the ground is pure and what arises from the ground is pure. The examples my teacher often would give is that if you plant wheat, you don't get rice; if you plant an apple tree, you don't get pears. Things arise according to how they are. If you go to the land of gold, you find gold; if you go to the land of silver, you find silver. If you apply the view of dzogchen, you find the intrinsic perfection of everything.

Sometimes the word dzogchen or dzogpachenpo is translated as the great perfection. Why? If you try to understand this just by reading books it is easy to get confused and that is why we have teachers. What does that mean to say that from the very beginning everything is perfect? It means that from the very beginning there has never been any any-thing, that there are no things. From the very beginning, every appearance is inseparable from the sphere of appearances. This sphere of appearance is called the 'dharmadatu', the realm of all dharmas, and these dharmas arise like rainbows in the sky, like nothing at all.

Tantric deity meditation practices illustrate this with the three stages of visualisation. Firstly the clear blue sky, then in the clear blue sky rainbow-coloured light arises which transforms into a seed syllable, then into the mandala palace and finally transforms into the deity. The deity comes out of the clear blue sky, that is to say, the deity is the manifestation of the potential of the sky.

Everything, even the deity, is inside emptiness, everything is inside the pure ground. It's not that it comes out of the ground.

Here's an example: in a criminal court there is a young man who's got in trouble. His lawyer says, But he is a good boy, he is from a good family, his father is like this, his mother is like that, please don't send him to prison. He is a good boy. Yes, but he stole, he stabbed someone. No! But he is from a good family! How could someone from a good family become a bad person? Well, because they each have their own karma. But when you see directly, my ground is emptiness, I am emptiness, my flat is emptiness, all my possessions are emptiness. Everything is empty of inherent self-nature.

Another example: I have many books and two years ago I got rid of more than half of my books, about a thousand books. I tried giving them away to people, to psychotherapy trainees and supervisees and so on. They would come to my clinic where I have piles of books. I say, *Please have these wonderful books*. They look at them and think, *I am not James, why would I read the same books as him, plus they are heavy to carry home.* I'm thinking, *I am giving you the most beautiful gift. These books are all gorgeous but I have too many books, so please take some. They will be so good for your life.* And they are thinking, *Maybe my tastes are different to James', maybe his books will make me confused, I don't want to read philosophy and all of these things.* It's like that. In MY OPINION, according to MY idea, these were wonderful books but for the other people they were not.

It is so important in life to you see this – something can be so meaningful to me but not to anyone else. I think I'm talking about a book, something out there in the world, which is innately good in itself., but what am I really talking about is my mind. When I say, *The book is good, full stop.* I am cheating myself and I'm cheating other people. Instead it is like this: *the book is good FOR ME, full stop.* It is my value judgement that says it is a good book.

Perhaps this is easier to understand with the example of medicine. I get sick and go to the doctor who gives me a prescription for my sore back. I have some pills to take every day. A friend visits and tells me they have a headache and asks if have any paracetamol? I say, *No, but I do have this back medicine from the doctor and it's very good medicine, it really helps me. Have some if that.* You say, *Don't be daft! That's for backs, not heads.* And I say *But it's medicine so it must be* *good. Please eat it.* If they are wise they will not eat it! It was medicine for me because of MY CONDITION, it is not objectively good.

Lion's gaze: look at your own mind, don't look at the world

The beginning of our dzogchen path is when we see that there are no selfexisting objects anywhere. When we imagine that there are self-existing objects and think that they are good or bad, this is the structure of our mind. Dzogchen instructions are to look at your own mind, don't look at the world.

Dzogchen refers to developing 'the lion's gaze', namely that if you throw a ball for a dog it will run after the ball but if you throw a ball for a lion, the lion will turn and look at you quizzically, Where did the ball come from? This is how we should practice in dzogchen. We look at where did the ball come from. A thought comes in your mind, these are wonderful books. Where did that thought come from? If you track the thought back, it shows your own mind. If you can watch the arising of the thought, feeling or sensation it is illuminating your own mind but if you take the content of the thought, feeling or sensation it seems to be saying something about an objective world out there.

So if this becomes clear for you, you can still continue in your ordinary life. You can talk to people about your holidays, the price of things in the shops, what you will do at Christmas... you can talk about anything. It's not that you have to change the structure of your life or the content of your conversation but you do need to observe that this is the display of the mind.

Garab Dorje's Three Statements

The first human teacher of dzogchen was Garab Dorje who received transmission from Vajrasattva who received it from Samantabhadra. Garab Dorje came into the world and started to teach dzogchen. As he was leaving, he appeared to Manjushrimitra and spoke three very well known statements that are considered to be the essence of dzogchen. At that time he was hovering in the air, surrounded by rainbow light. In other words, he was manifesting as the energy of unborn space with its potential represented by the rainbow light.

Statement 1: direct introduction to your own mind

His first point was that you need to be introduced to your own mind. You can be introduced in various ways, by doing practice with the teacher, through study, through hearing a teaching... however we are mainly introduced to our mind by being with our mind. Once you get the basic instruction, you have to stay with that and sit and observe your own mind. Your mind will reveal itself to you; it's not hidden.

The only thing that hides the mind is that you don't look at the mind, for example, when you get used to making judgments about things. You might say, *Do have one of these apples, they're delicious*. Maybe the other person doesn't like apples, maybe they don't like this kind of apple. Maybe you like quite a sour apple and they like a very sweet apple. Maybe they like it very crisp and you like it a bit softer. You think that you're talking about the apple but now let's turn it around, like the lion. *This is a wonderful apple*. This comes out of me. This thought arises, the sound comes up from my lungs, the air travels through my voice box and comes out. The thought also arose in the space. I am a site of emergence of the energy of the ground manifesting in the world. When we walk, we walk according to the road; when we talk, we talk according to the people we are with. Its relational.

Our thoughts arise according to the structure of our existence, it is not already established; I am the unfolding of the potential of the ground mediated through the particularities of my structure. A traditional example for that would be, a crystal prism. When you find a prism in nature it will usually have some little fissures or coloration something inside. Normally we would call them flaws because we want it to be clear white but they actually bring more colour. So we are like a a crystal with little nicks and little fractures inside so that when the light comes into this crystal, not only is it refracting into the rainbow colour, but it's got an extra diversification according to our pattern.

So when you go to buy apples in a big market, you might see ten types of apples. *Which apple should I buy? Here's the kind of apple I like!* So the light shining on the apple coming in your eye and the light of your mind arises in response. These two lights meet in this fragmentation of your history/your

personality/your beliefs about yourself and you say, *These are my apples, they're the best ones, this is what I always buy.* This is not an illumination of the quality of the apple, this is the illumination of the tendency which you have developed. It is not a fault or a mistake, it is the diversity of the world showing itself.

We don't all choose the same thing; people wear very different kinds of clothes, they have different furniture in their flat or their house, they go to different kinds of place for holiday, they like to go to different kinds of restaurants. People have very diverse lives. This is all the movement of light through crystalline form in its refraction, in the way the light shows its own ingredients. We have clear light or invisible white light which we can't see but which illuminates everything. When the light goes into the crystal, then what is embedded in the light or hidden in the light or is the potential of the clear light gets revealed. It comes out as these five rainbow colours.

Likewise in interaction with the world, as the light of experience comes through us, we have our particular response. From the buddhist point of view, this is perfect. That is to say, you are authentically yourself, this is you, these are the apples you buy, that is perfect. 'Perfect' doesn't mean that in a hierarchy of judgment you have indeed chosen the best apple and that you can now apply for a job as part of the German Apple Distribution Company and you will be our number one Apple Selector because you choose the best apple. It's not like that. It's not about perfect and imperfect as oppositional polarity. It's more that it rings true.

Some of you may have bought a vajra and a bell. Traditionally, when you go to buy a bell, you ring it and then as the vibrations are coming out, you open your mouth and you make sound of Ooohooohoohoo and increase the vibration and then you can see, does it ring true, does it have a pure note? Because when they cast the bell, sometimes it's not very well cast and the note is off, the sound fragments and it can be jarring on the ears. But if the bell is well made, the tone is pure.

It is what it is

So when something is perfect, it is what it is. It's perfect and what this means is, don't do anything. Don't interfere. Don't try to improve. That's why some of the texts say that the mind itself is not improved by the good thoughts of all the buddhas and it's not contaminated or damaged by the bad thoughts of sentient beings.

Awareness is here and this is arising. And if you don't enter into judgment, if you don't manifest a bias – if you don't enter into conscious evaluating, if you stay with the mirror-like awareness – it's simply what is reflected. It's like this. It's like this... This is the pre-conceptual intrinsic perfection of everything. As soon as you apply concepts, then you have good/bad and right/wrong. All the polarities come in to existence, but in the instant of manifestation everything just is like this.

If we go for a walk down our street many thoughts can arise in response to evaluating what we see: why do people drop litter, why are these dogs not on a lead, why are these people not wearing masks, what a noise these children are making... But, if you walk down the street in your presence, in your awareness, you see light shining after the rain on the crisp bag the school child has just thrown away. It has colour, it has shape. It's crunched by their hand. If you see it, it is a particular shaping. But we don't leave it there, we don't let it be as it is. We take that appearance into our frame of reference, into our interpretive matrix and then we evaluate it according to our concern. And we say, *Look what children do nowadays. If I had done that when I was a child, I would have been in trouble. but nowadays who cares!* What does that tell you? It tells you that you're getting old, that's all. There is no truth in these opinions.

Perfection: simplicity of appearance before interpretation

So very important to understand what is meant by perfection. It means the simplicity of appearance before interpretation. This goes back to the first level of ignorance. When something arises whether it seems to be outside or inside, some memory or thought, it comes and goes. Each moment with phenomena is changing and changing because phenomena are always shifting.

If you are walking down the street looking at what's outside, you don't really see your thoughts so much but if you're sitting in meditation, not moving your head much, then what you see is not shifting so much and you become more aware that your thoughts and feelings are shifting. Either way, movement is occurring. What is it?

If you stay with the freshness, then – in the text – it's called clarity. In Tibetan, it is called *sal-wa* [gSal Ba]. It's the shining/revealing of just this. What is it? It's clarity. If you say, *no! no! no! what is it?* If clarity is not enough, if the bright immediate luminosity is not enough, then you come into naming/judging/ evaluating and having an affective response. Then you say, *This rubbish on the street is terrible. I don't know how people can live with themselves when they behave this way. Are we animals? Are we?* You get angry. The thought that 'it's rubbish', the thought that 'it's bad' is your mental activity, it's your mental activity.

This is the third level of ignorance, as we looked at before the break. The ignorance of naming everything. For example, the packet of potato chips that's lying on the pavement, you think, *It is rubbish. It shouldn't be there. It is in the wrong place, It should go in the dustbin. That's what the dustbins are for.* You pick it up and put it in the dustbin; that is mental activity. What is there? It's shape and colour. Now it doesn't mean that you can't pick it up and put it in the dustbin. This is 'my' mental activity, this is what *I* choose to do in relation to what I choose to call 'rubbish'. It is not intrinsically 'rubbish'. It is 'rubbish' according to my interpretation.

It is very important to see that this is my mind. Everything in samsara and nirvana is created by the mind. The mind is chief. So if you watch your own mind, you see how you can give yourself a really hard time, how you can make life very difficult for yourself. You can get outraged, *how can they do this!* The answer is quite simple, they have the karma to do it. How can President Trump behave in that way – very easily. Clearly he enjoys being himself. He doesn't have a problem with it. He knows he's better than anyone else. He knows he's entitled to do

whatever he wants. So he does it and he has a great time. He doesn't seem to be racked with self-doubt. I can't imagine him taking antidepressants. He is how he is. Then you have your opinion, you support him or you don't support him. You judge him in this way or that way. This is the light going through this fractured crystal. You're adding judgment and opinion according to your own structure. This is showing you, it's not showing you Donald Trump.

This is what dzogchen meditation is. You don't have to only sit on a cushion to do it. You observe your mind as you interact with the environment. You see what you are up to. You observe your own falsity: when you say, *Donald Trump is an idiot*, that's my opinion. He is what he is. He's happy being him. My opinion doesn't stick on to him. *I know the truth about him. Look, what he's doing, how crazy.* This is me, this is not him. I think I'm talking about the object, but this is the subject. This is the subject. When you recognise that, then you start to see the turbulence of your own mind, the limitation of your own mind, the way in which you fabricate particular positions and interpretations. Then you see that you are obscuring the world by not seeing clearly because you project your belief and your interpretation onto the world.

Garab Dorje's first point is to be introduced, or to introduce yourself, to your own mind as it is. In my hand I've got a cup and inside it I have some cold herbal tea. This is my cup of tea. When I finish it, I can wash it and put something else inside. It is a cup situationally in this moment. It's a cup of cold herbal tea. It is a tea cup. It is not always a tea cup but due to causes and conditions at the moment, since it contains herbal tea, it is a teacup. For the moment. It's not intrinsically a teacup. The cup is a potential and the potential is open to a dialogic relationship. If I put coffee in it or apple juice, whatever I put in it, the cup is willing to make a relationship with what is now its content. It didn't choose to have the apple juice put inside. It didn't say, *Oh*, *James I'm tired of tea*, come on, please put in the apple juice. Thank God! I've been waiting so long for the *apple juice. Oh!* That cup is never saying that, the cup is just a cup. This is your mind. Your mind is like the cup. Awareness is open, it has no prejudice, no bias, no interest. It's just there. What arises IN is revealed by awareness. What we take to be good/bad, me/not me and so on, are all the movement of reflections within the mirror of awareness.

Awareness and the ego-self

So what is important – the content of the reflection or the quality of the mirror? If you only look at the reflection, the reflections change and then you have the turbulence of reactivity. If you see the mirror as mirror, the mirror never changes although the reflection changes. This is your mind. When someone smiles at me, I smile. If somebody speaks critically to me, I don't feel happy. So this ego-self is like a reflection in a mirror. It's part of a conversation. It's a dialogue of relatedness of inter-penetration. But the awareness reveals smiling or frowning or tears or sadness or joy; the mirror is just showing and just showing. It is like the cup, the cup just gets filled, the mind is just filled.

Awareness has no door keeper, it has no option, no choice. It just shows. It is equal opportunity. It has no bias. Consciousness has bias. Consciousness is the mental operation which supports the continuity of the illusion that I exist as a separate ego-self. This is my own falsity. The intelligence of consciousness forms opinions; it forms narrative and it conveys these out to other people: *Let me tell you about myself, do you want to know my opinion about your plan for the next project.* Consciousness formulates shapes. Awareness doesn't do this, awareness is just open.

Rigpai tsal: intrinsic potential of awareness

From awareness, the intrinsic potential of awareness arises, it's called the *rigpai tsal* [Tib. Rig Pa'i rTsal]. 'Tsal' means like the energy that goes through the crystal, it's a manifesting energy. If you're in a meeting a business meeting, and somebody asks you, *What do you think about the project*? You speak, you relate, you show. What do you show? Movement in relation to movement. You have your personality, your history. It is not the truth about you. This is a forming of your potential which has a particular repetitive structuring in this life – you're this kind of a person, you studied these kinds of issues. So everyone at work knows, *He always speaks about that aspect. That's what he's up about, that's what he believes in/she believes in. She's really keen on that, so she's going to talk about that.* So the project and your mind arise and do their little dance and then you say something, you give an opinion. It is sound and emptiness.

Words come out of your mouth, the vibration of the wind goes in people's ears, then they understand it. They don't like it or they may say that it's very nice. Like this, we are pulsing and moving and dancing all the time. Nothing is established. If you try to convince your enemies that you're right, it's a waste of time. If you can, try to collaborate with people who are able to collaborate, then life is easy. If you have to collaborate with an asshole, that's really hard. To collaborate you need to know what is going on.

Who is speaking? Speaking is speaking. Who is speaking now? Now I'm speaking. But it's only in a conventional way we say that James is speaking. Speaking is coming through me because I don't know what I'm going to say. The words come out through me, I am a vehicle. I'm like the cup, the cup fills from the inside. Most cups fill from the outside but the James cup fills from the inside and flows out of his mouth. Too much James coming out and out and out. Who is doing this cup-filling of James? This is awareness, this is *rigpai tsal* – energy of life is moving in connectivity. What is established? Nothing but connectivity. The function of manifestation is the interplay of manifestation.

Co-emergence collaboration

If you work in an organisation where you have to produce reports and conclusions and bring a project to a proper end, go through the accounts and show that you made a profit or that you did well, all of this is the movement of energy. Nothing is established. You stay awake late at night to produce the report. Then you show it people. You send it by email. You print some paper copies. You hand it out and say, *Please read my report.* People look through the executive summary on page one, put it on the table and say, *Thank you. We'll think about it.* They never think about it. Your work has gone nowhere. This happens to so many reports. What was the purpose of the work? It was a form of participation.

There have been so many reports on climate change or government enquiries and people say, *this is incredibly important*. At an international conference on a public podium speaking to a microphone, the government uses that voice! When the government goes back to their own country, they are not on the podium, they are not speaking in the microphone and what they say then is completely different. *Of course, we will change our carbon output...* on the podium. This is podium speech. This is in public. This is samsara, why would you be surprised that governments don't keep their promises? It's a game – a game of power and deception and play and illusion, a theatre of illusion.

We follow the middle way, we don't make it strongly real but we don't become cynical. Too much irony is very bad for the heart. So we say, *Okay, people are like that, so what can we do in this situation? How can I be pliable, flexible, connective and make the best of it?* This is how we have to work the middle way between externalism (that it's strongly real) and a kind of nihilistic impermanence (that there's nothing at all). We have to find the middle way.

All the non-governmental organisations in the world are doing this all the time, negotiating. If they speak too strongly, they get blanked and nobody listens. If they don't speak strongly enough, nobody hears. They have to tune their voice all the time to the energy of the moment deciding when to go forward and when to go back. This is called co-emergence collaboration.

Connectivity: movement of compassion

Connectivity is the movement of compassion in the world. So in the great perfection, 'what is perfect' is the moment of how it is. For example, you see a picture of a huge bit of a glacier coming into the sea and then a huge bit of it just falls off and now it's floating away. It is an iceberg. It is beautiful and it's terrible. It's beautiful, the light is glinting on the ice, amazing little waves rippling around. It's terrible because the implication is more global warming. Water doesn't reflect as much sunlight as ice. Eco-people are getting even more worried because they know what it means according to their interpretation.

Now I say again we go for middle way. It's not that it's just beautiful because it's terrible for us. And it's not just terrible because it's also beautiful. It happens. If you say that it's only terrible, the government will not listen. You have to find a skilful way. This is what is important.

So in terms of the path the more you understand the falseness of taking your opinion to be the truth, the more you see that speech is a movement of energy which is connecting with other people. And therefore, it is a method or skilful means and therefore you have to be connective in your speech. *How do I work with this situation if I claim to have the truth and you don't agree with me?* The logic is that you are wrong but when I tell you that you are wrong and I am right, you don't want to collaborate with me anymore. That's pretty obvious. So telling other people that they're wrong is not generally a good idea. You have to work with respect for their positioning, however it is.

The position of dzogchen is inclusive; everything is valid. People who take a strong view of truth are feeding conflict and conflict usually doesn't change very much.

Collaboration arises from an integrative field in which many voices are moving. That's why dzogchen is very very practical. It's the energy as it emerges in the field of emergence and you participate with your potential with other people. They have their potential. And so you have to keep reviewing what is possible and things will suddenly change.

Three aspects of awareness

Garab Dorje says, 'awaken to awareness', which is naked fresh unborn and has no fixed content, like the mirror. Then in that mirror, many different showings arise – these are not you and they are you simultaneously. They are not you as an ego identity, a personal separated identity but they are you as your experience of the luminosity of the ground.

So there are these three aspects: 1) open empty spaciousness which is the ground, 2) immediate arising of the clarity of the field which is subject and object displayed together and 3) all-pervasive compassion (as it's described traditionally) that is my participation with everything.

So when you walk down the street, you hear sounds, you hear cars, you hear a bus, you hear maybe a train tooting in the distance. You see dogs and cats, you see all kind of things. This is your compassion. That is to say, you have a reaction, you have a communication in this context.

In dzogchen, compassion means connectivity, when you break connectivity then you enter into judgment. You say, *this is good or this is bad*. Connectivity means you start from connection and you work with that connectivity. You find a way to relate to what is going on because what is going on is not an object. Subject and object is a misinterpretation, an expression of our own falsity.

We are moving in space. Since you got up this morning, you have been moving in space. When you go to your kitchen, it depends on the layout of the kitchen. What kind of cooker do you have? Do you want to make coffee? Do you use a cafeteria? Do you put it in the bottom of a cup and pour on boiling water, or do you have a percolator? There are many ways to make coffee. There are many kinds of tea. Some people put the milk in before the tea. Some people put the tea in and then add the milk. It's connectivity. Patterns. Some people follow what their mother did. Some people decide that they would never do what their mother did. They say, *I hated my mother, so I only do it my own way.* Who can determine these diversity of patterns!

Practice: observe how we split the world into subject and object

So the path is again and again to observe how you split the world into subject on the inside and object on the outside. There are no fixed objects, everything you see is the dynamic in this moment. It's radiance of the potential of the ground. When you think about it, when you consider it to be other than you separate from you existing in itself, then subject and object split. That's also a way of talking. If you understand subject and object as a narrative mode, as a trope, then you can play with it. But if you're trapped in it, if you feel I am the subject and you are the object and I'm going to tell you who you are and what you should do, then you're in a bad situation because you have cut the connection. You've taken up a position of separation and now you're trying to work out what is around. It's a lot of effort but anyway, this is what consciousness does; it's always trying to make meaning.

Awareness doesn't make any meaning because it sees immediately the intuitive direct meaning. Everything is meaningful. Everything is meaningful as it is. But when you enter into judgment, when you build up an image of this is good or that is bad, then you have a different situation. You can observe this for yourself in your own life.

Practice: whatever is occurring, just let it be

The main place that we practice this is in our meditation where we sit, and experience is occurring and we let it occur. The main instruction for the meditation is: don't enter into judgment and don't enter into reactivity. However you take something to be, observe: I am taking it to be, I am taking this arising and pulling it into my frame of reference. Leave it alone! Leave it as it is. Stay with it as it is and it arises and passes.

So we can do a little bit of meditation together just now. Sit in a comfortable position letting your spine carry your weight so that the weight of your head is going down through your spine. Keep the muscles relax. Usually we do this with our gaze open into the space in front of us. We're not staring at a distant wall, we're just allowing the gaze to rest open. As soon as your gaze locks onto something, it will be subject and object but if you keep the gaze relaxed and open, resting in space, then object side and subject side are moving together and you are not locked into subject. Then, whatever arises whether it seems to be sensation or perception through the senses, don't do anything. Whatever comes comes, whatever goes goes.

This might sound completely stupid because all our life people have been telling us to try harder and do our best and that it's up to us, we've got to make our way in life. So doing things and trying things seems very important, but here this is completely different. This is relax, open and allow movement to move.

Remember the two basic aspects of life: 1) stillness which is the unborn unchanging ground and the unchanging awareness, 2) movement which is everything else. The clarity of appearance and the movement of connectivity – these are both movement. The mind is like space and the movement takes on the form of earth, water, fire and wind in the various permutations they have.

So whatever is occurring, just let it be. So we sit like this for a little while. If you find yourself getting trapped in stuff or if you feel I don't know what I'm doing, then relax into the out breath, open into the space and then just be with whatever's occurring.

Each of us is primordial buddhahood

The Tibetan word for buddha is sangye [Tib. Sangs rGyas). 'Sang' means to purify and 'ye' means to increase or to fill. So generally it means to purify all your faults and limitations, and then to be filled with all the good qualities of the buddha – the paramitas, great compassion and so on.

In the dzogchen tradition though we talk of *ka-dag*, primordial purity which is the intrinsic purity of the ground and we are not separate from the ground. So the purification is already there, there is nothing to purify. We also talk of this instant presence or effortlessly arising, *lhun-drub*, this is like the 'rGyas', filling which is part of the buddha. We are immediately full, infinitely empty, pure, and infinitely full and ungraspable. And these two are united from the very beginning. This is why, 'how we are' is described as 'ye sangye' [Tib. Ye Sangs rGyas], primordial buddha.

Each of us is primordial buddhahood. If you didn't have the quality of buddha, how would you get it! Would you find it somewhere else then it would be not you. If you think, it's hidden inside you and you have to take the dirt off, then you are existing as both dirt and buddha. But buddha has never been contaminated. We have to remember what Buddha Shakyamuni said many many times that all compounded things are impermanent. So if buddhahood was compounded, if it was created and brought together and made, it would last for a while and then vanish. Awakening is infinite, it has no limit to, not of time or space.

Why do we get involved with things that arise in meditation?

So when we sit in the meditation many things are arising and passing and we get involved. Why do we get involved? For three reasons: 1) we think they are real and we are real; we are still living in duality, 2) we think some things are good; this leads to desire, 3) we think some things are not so good; this leads to aversion or dislike or anger. We have consolidation and then we have appropriation. It's pulling the things I like into me or aversion, pushing the things I don't like away from me. So these are the three root poisons and this is what we get in the meditation. Trouble in meditation arises because we substantialise what is there. If your mind, your presence doesn't move, you will see that everything is moving. But if your consciousness chases after phenomena, the very fact that consciousness is moving creates the illusion that what you're thinking about is permanent. So you might think, *Why did I do that yesterday, I shouldn't have done that, I made a big mistake.* Yesterday is gone, yesterday does not exist but I think, *I did something very bad. Now I am troubled about yesterday. What can I do? My yesterday is gone.* In this way, I turn yesterday into something strongly real like a real place I can go to, *I can get a plane to Berlin.*

I can go in my mind to yesterday since I have the reification, the solidification of my idea of yesterday. And then I massage into it the affective feeling that yesterday was a terrible mistake or that yesterday something very special happened when I met that nice man/woman... Things arise and pass and we don't know if they're going to last. We do what we can and maybe it works out, maybe it doesn't work out. But it has a kind of quality of participation of energy. Another person is not a thing you can get.

So when we're doing the practice, we say that our mind from the very beginning is buddha. Everything which is arising is the display of the ground however in my own falsity, I don't see the occurrence as the radiance of the ground. I think it is this which is good, it is that which is bad. This is my mind under the power of ignorance.

Practice: observe our belief that phenomenon truly exist

Ignorance is ignoring the ground. When the ground is ignored, we imagine that illusory phenomena are truly existing. This is our delusion. The exit from this is to observe the belief that they are existing and see that a belief is only a movement of the mind. It's always moving.

Manifestation is movement. Thoughts come and go, sensations come and go, dogs in the street come and go, birds in the sky come and go, the wind in the trees comes and goes. Every aspect of manifestation is changing. The colour of the house opposite me is changing as the clouds move across the sky, some thick some thin, the level of illumination on the bricks changes. It's movement.

So we become false or we cheat ourselves by believing that something is inherently real. This goes back to the first level of ignorance. Again and again, when you feel this definite knowledge arising, when you feel the emotion of a strong opinion like good, bad, right, wrong, know that you are lost. This is an auto intoxication, a kind of mini psychosis: I've entered a world of delusion in which I believe that something is truly real when it is not.

But if I don't follow it, it vanishes. The delusion, which rises like an openjawed monster up out of the sea, dissolves back into the sea. It was a wave, it wasn't a shark. It was just a wave. But if I think, *It's a shark*, and so I am swimming away, the very turbulence of my movement is going to get me drowned. Just stay with whatever comes.

Practice: don't enter into judgement

Just stay with whatever comes. This is hard to do because we are energised creatures, our energy, body system is already vibrating with hopes and fears. We have to get closer to our embodied self. The best way to do that is to sit and to observe how your body changes, how you can be energised or sad or depressed. Don't enter into judgment when you're depressed and your body feels heavy. Stay with that. Then you find what is depression. If you find yourself overtaken with jealousy, stay with that; or with pride, or with anger, with whatever is arising; stay with that. Don't make it the enemy otherwise you're back in duality. Stay present with what is arising, not merging in it, not standing apart and judging it but just with it. You then start to taste the freshness of each of these moments as it's occurring.

This is what is referred to in the texts as *sal-wa* [Tib. gSal Ba], as clarity. The clarity of the mind is the immediate showing of all these varieties of flavours and colours and emotions coming and going. Don't freeze it. Let the water flow. It's in the nature of water to flow. If you freeze it, you get a cube of ice, then you have your strong opinion, *This person is wonderful, this person is terrible...* People change according to circumstances. Everyone is water. Every cat is water. Every dog is water. Every bird is water. Every tree is water. It's flowing, flowing, flowing.

No one can do this for you. You have to do this yourself but it's not something you do – you have to not do. This is a deconstructive practice, you have already constructed so much. By staying present with the energy of construction and not engaging with it, construction dissolves and there is space. And then the next and the next and the next... there is no inherent existence. Nothing is strongly real but it appears. There is emptiness and appearance, emptiness and clarity, emptiness and awareness. There is no substance, no essence as a substantial reality. It's light, movement, joy.

Okay, so we have a break now and then we will come back for our final session. So I will see you then. Bye for now.

October 9, 2020. Lecture 3 of 3

Garab Dorje's 3 statements (cont'd)

Statement 2: don't enter into doubt

The second point of Garab Dorje is not to remain in doubt or to be clear that this is just how it is. This means that you stay with whatever is occurring, allowing it to occur without hope or fear, without ambition. A situation manifests and you're there with it.

If you are following a path which is going from somewhere to somewhere else then you can be fairly sure that there will be signs along the road showing you that it is 200 kilometres to get there, 150 kilometres, 100 kilometres and so on. You'll see markers along the road that will indicate that you're making progress. On the dzogchen path, however, we're not making efforts and we're not trying to get somewhere so people often become disheartened. They think, *I'm not making any progress, my mind is just the way it was* and they feel a need to do something.

This is the time to remember the paramitas: the generosity of giving ourselves to the practice, the patience to stay with the practice and the various qualities of endurance that allow us just to do what we do. And what we do is nothing, we just sit. Movement is always occurring. If your mind moves, you will be in dualistic consciousness. If your mind doesn't move, then you are in open awareness. These are the only two options.

Having recognised that from the very beginning your own mind has no essence or substance to it, then by not doing anything, you release yourself from the karmic compulsion to be busy, to engage, to have intention. You allow the self-liberating of phenomena to occur – thoughts, feelings, memories, perceptions all arise and pass, arise and pass. They go by themselves.

Because they're going, you don't need to push them away. Because they're going, you can't hang on to them. Often it takes us a little bit of time to really recognise,*This is how it is because they're going, I don't need to be active, I cannot hang on to anything anyway.*

The lizard's tail

When I was living in C R Lama's house in India these gecko lizards would run up and down on the wall. Sometimes they would be there and sometimes we would notice one that didn't have any tail maybe because the cat in the garden had tried to catch it. If a cat grabs the tail, they just let go of the tail and run away. This is like our mind, you think that you're going to catch the thing which is arising but it vanishes and you're left with the tail. The tail by itself doesn't do anything. So the more of this happens, you just let it go. It is going to go.

Everything goes but it doesn't leave a big empty hole because next moment is full and so is the next moment, and the next... This is what effortlessly arising (*lhun-drub*) means. It's a continuous stream of this and this and this and this. And if you turn this into that and look for it, it's gone.

So the meditation instruction is always: don't go after past thoughts, don't wait expectantly for future thoughts, stay present with whatever is occurring. Garab Dorje is saying not to enter into doubt. To enter into doubt means that you think about something, Why am I doing this, is this the right way, what should I be doing?

The instruction is very simple but how can you get enlightened by doing such a simple thing? Well, if that thought arises in your mind, remember the example of Prince Siddhartha. After he left home, he spent many years wandering around a desert area by the Niranjana River. In summer is very very hot and desolate. He did all kind of exercises, yoga, meditation, fasting and so on. Finally he sat under a bodhi tree and he said, *I'm not going to move from here.* He sat on a comfortable seat. He had been given some sweet rice pudding by a woman from the village and he just sat and he said I'm not going to do anything, I'm not going to move anywhere. By that not moving, he became more aware of the movement of the mind.

So when you see a painting of that, you see the Buddha sitting or Prince Siddhartha sitting. He's not yet the Buddha and the 'maras' come, some are violent and aggressive, some are sexual and seductive, some are terrifying and he doesn't respond. He's not drawn through desire. He's not pushed by aversion. He just sits and they go by. And he touches the earth and says, As the earth is my witness, I'm not moving.

Practice: not identifying with the subjective response

So this is exactly the practice of dzogchen: non-reactivity, non-identification, not identifying with what seems to be coming to me, not identifying with the subjective response which arises. Both subject and object forms are reflections in the mirror, let them come and let them go.

In this way, what we experience is a gradual thinning of the impulse towards involvement, a gradual reduction of the energy of arousal. When you see that whatever arises vanishes, then you have to ask, *Why do I spend so much time trying to get something which vanishes. Instead of trying to get it, to have it, to make it mine, perhaps, I can just shift my energy towards appreciation.* This appreciation is the quality of enjoyment.

So whatever is arising in its movement is shining and bright. Even if it's sadness or fear, there is a bright quality to the immediacy of it. Stay with that and this gradually manifests as what's called the sambhogakaya, the radiance of the buddhas' participation on the level of clarity and immediate presence. When you recognise your mind itself, when you awaken to it, that's the dharmakaya. Then from this, you have the presence in the clarity, this is the sambhogakaya.

Statement 3: continue in this way, don't try to change it or improve it

Third point of Garab Dorje is: continue in this way, don't try to change it, don't try to improve it.

We live in a world where there are many many possibilities. There are all kinds of spiritual groups and spiritual practices and activities which promises a good result. But we follow the path of simple presence and this presence brings the reward of an unchanging clarity. If you go after different methods, you can learn how to do this and to do that and to do the other but if you do it (or any method) out of a sense of lack, then you get lost.

For example, if you're connected with a dharma group, you might be interested in learning how to make *tormas*. Sometimes they're carved with wood

and you paint them or they're made with *tsampa* (roasted barley flour). Then you paint them with butter. There are different shapes of tormas for different functions. The key thing in any dharma activity, whether it's learning to play the symbols or the trumpet or to do mudras, is that if there is ego gratification in doing this – if you feel that it has made you a better person or a more interesting person or a more accomplished person – then it's unhelpful. The potential of your life is manifesting moment by moment and this potential can take on all kinds of forms. And if you have the time and the interest, you can take on this dharma activity function. Whether you devote your life to learning how to make samosas or make a good chapati or make a dharma, it doesn't make any difference. Why? Because these are activities. If you make your own bread, there are many stages of that: you have the flour and the water and the kneading and the waiting and this and that. You have a sequence of processes just like with making a 'torma'. Oh! but the torma is very holy and the bread is not holy. Says who? Oh, the 'torma' is buddhist and the bread is not buddhist. Who says!

Everything arises from the same ground, everything is the manifestation of dharma. So whether you are engaging in so-called dharma activity or worldly activity, the main point is to see that all energy arises from the ground and you can participate in that movement of energy or not.

When we sit, we're allowing the movement to pass by, to pass through. We're not engaged. When you come to the end of the sitting moment, you relate to the movement of energy and it carries you. It carries you here and there doing ordinary things – paying your bills, feeding the cat, going for a walk or maybe if you have a shrine you might want to clean the bowls. Whatever you're doing is the interplay of energy manifesting a subject in a world of object. As long as the subject is linked to the field and the field is linked to emptiness, there is no problem at all.

Remember, ignorance is taking an arising to be something in itself, to cut an arising off from its own ground. This is the falseness of the delusion of misperception: not seeing how it is but imagining it to be a thing.

The key thing is to relax into the ground

In dzogchen, the key thing is to relax into the ground. The ground is the source of everything so your mind merges with the ground. Your mind is part of the field of participation and your mind is the participation. In Tibetan they use the term *ngo-bo rang-zhin thug-je* [Tib. *Ngo-Bo Rang-bZhin Thugs-rJe]*. Ngo-wo means like the truth or the essence; ngo-wo is linked to the face; it's your own original face, it's how you are, which is emptiness.

From this, you have 'rang-zhin' which is like the display of the nature. It's like the complexion of your face. The potential of your face which could go in all kind of expressions, shows itself as its complexion – looking healthy or not healthy, looking tired or energetic. The face and the complexion are not very different. So the face itself is the emptiness and the complexion is the clarity of the mind. This is 'rig-tong', awareness and emptiness, and 'sal-tong', clarity and emptiness.

Thirdly, we have *thug-je*, infinite all-pervading compassion which is the energy of connectivity. So as you're moving in the world, you are not moving ON the world, you're not moving THROUGH the world, you ARE the movement of the world. As we looked before, when you walk down the street, every step you take is the revealing of the street. The street and you are arising together. It's not that the street is there objectively, and you walk down it in your little body and see, *This is a house, this is a car...* That is conceptual; that is how you make up your story about it.

So when you get up from the meditation – because you've been sitting with your eyes open – you're already here. You're moving in this field of light of which you are a part. Then if you're going to go outside, you're shifting the amount of freshness because you're walking down the street... *and this is coming, that is coming... new waves! I cannot work it out! I cannot sort it out!* I don't have to manage it, it is self-arising and self-vanishing. So the ego's need to be in charge, to know what is going on, to be able to make sense of what is occurring, gradually diminishes. It is the sign of practice instruction that you increasingly trust spontaneity – not your spontaneity but the spontaneity of the field which manifests in what you would ordinarily consider to be yourself. The big problem, the root problem, the root self-deception, is the sense that 'I exist apart from everything else', 'I am an individual autonomous agent'. The truth of my individual self is that its root is empty, it arises in the shared field of clarity and it moves in the field of clarity. It never becomes something separate and apart.

Do not grab concepts as the truth

The ego is lonely because the ego is based on a lie. On the basis of thinking, *I* am just James, no one else in this whole country is James, no one else in the whole world or the whole universe is James. Only me! My father is dead, my mother is dead. Poor me. I'm getting old and I'm going to die. Where will I go? This is the anxiety of the ego: where do I belong? What will happen to me? The winds of time and fate blow across us, what will happen?

Then when we sit we are aware that *I* am infinite emptiness. Oh, *I* am this bright field. Oh, *I* am this movement. The open empty space is ungraspable, the bright field is ungraspable, this moving moment is ungraspable. I am ungraspable. I am not a thing. I'm here spontaneously, intuitively in this flow. What is very important to note here for meditation is that concepts are not the enemy, but it's how you take hold of the concept, how you use the concept.

James' pan with the hot handle

An ordinary example is in my kitchen where I have two stainless steel pans which look the same, each with a handle. The handle of one of the pans is fixed onto the pan in such a way that it doesn't get hot; the handle of the other pan is fixed in a different way and when you heat the pan, the handle gets hot. So I have to remember, this handle will be hot. I have to put a cloth around the handle if I want to lift the pot when some boiling thing is in it. The handle is not bad. It's just that the handle will burn my hand if I forget the handle. Which I do sometimes! Then the mind is jumping here there and everywhere. *What stupid person designed this stupid pan!* There's nothing wrong, the pan is just a pan. I forgot, I didn't check. So perception is the precision of this moment. If I see, Oh, *it's this pan* and I put a cloth around the handle then I don't get any trouble.

It's the same with the concept. If you lift concepts, if you allow concepts to move and you collaborate with them, if you work with the circumstance of the

concept, you don't get burned. But if you grab the concept and think the concept is telling you the truth about the situation, then it's difficult. You can find this out for yourself, it's not hidden or esoteric. You don't need some special initiation in order to see this. You just look at your own mind. You know what it's like to get lost in thoughts about the past or worrying about the future. Maybe you go to the doctor and they refer you to the hospital for some tests and you start to imagine all sort of things that could go wrong. Then you remember that these the troubling thoughts seem to catch me because I am catchable.

Practice: don't get caught by thoughts

When you're sitting in the practice, observe that you're trying to stay open but you become catchable and the thought takes you over again, So in that moment don't try to change anything, don't change the content of the mind but just stay present. And again and again you get caught and carried, caught and carried. The more you sit like that, the more you see that there is a consolidation of my sense of self. That is to say, the subtle feeling of fear and anxiety is becoming merged in the energy that is arising, so that it starts to vibrate. When you have the vibration on the subject side, it locks together with the corresponding vibration on the object side and now I'm off... whee..., *Oh my God, what is this pain. I need to get a scan. Maybe I'm going to die and what should I do?* We don't know what will happen. We don't know what the hospital will say. Whatever you imagine might happen, you don't know.

So you're entertaining yourself by telling yourself a short story. Once upon a time there was an ageing man who had to live with not only a pig's heart but a dog's heart and a chicken's heart too all at the same time. Now he had three hearts so every time he walked down the road, he's walking very peculiarly. People think *Poor drunk old man* but it's because he has three hearts. The little chicken heart moves too quickly. Like that, it's a story; it's an imagination. That's the human mind, thought after thought keeps on coming. I can fall into the story and get carried away by it. It is said that you are like a bull that has had a ring put through its nose to attach a rope. Thoughts lead you like the rope leads the bull. When the ego formation arises, it's always born with a ring in its nose. Anything can pull you in all sorts of directions.

Awareness has no ring, no nose, it's completely clear but you get caught. The key thing here is to not see being caught or being lost as a problem, rather use it to stay with the experience of being caught – HOW IS THIS? If you say, what is it? Then you come to a conclusion, it becomes solid and you become trapped inside it. But if you can say, HOW? Then you are looking at the process of thickening or freezing or congealing.

So when your mind is thickening, when you start to worry, you become more sticky, you become more dense and heavy. Who is dense and heavy? Illusion! There is no ego self, the ego self is a thickened pattern of the potential of the mind. Say you want to make a sauce, a very simple sauce. You have some butter and some flour and you heat it up in the pan a little bit and then you add slowly add water or milk and stir this in. Gradually a sauce forms. Maybe it gets too thick so what do you do now? You add water, What is water? Water is the energy of flow. So when the thick sauce that is starting to stick to the bottom of the pan and burn, has more water added and you stir it around, it won't burn. The sauce will gradually soften but you have to do it carefully because you don't want lumps.

It is the same with yourself in the meditation. You add the water of the awareness, of the flow of experience: self-arising, self-vanishing, self-arising, self-vanishing. This is the flow of life. The more you stay in touch with this energy of the flow which is just there by itself – no-one is doing it – then this sticky sauce of yourself, this glue of yourself, will dissolve. It's not dissolved by you, it's dissolved by the flow of experience. So you are not doing it because if you do it, you're back with duality: there is a bad object, I need to change the object, I'm going to do this. If you enter into that, it's just another theatre, another story.

Imagining stories

All that ignorance produces is stories and what is a story? it's this and this and this... Once upon a time there was a boy, he didn't like to go to school but he had to, da, da, da... on and on and on and on. One thought vanish, one thought vanish, one thought vanish. That's all! It is like a pattern in the clouds. Sometimes you look at the clouds and you think you see an elephant, or a dragon, or a house... Nothing is there but you see a pattern and identify it as being in the cloud. There's no real pattern in the cloud because the cloud has no substance to support a real thing and yet it is as if there is an elephant. It is AS IF.

Once upon a time long long ago in a distant land, there was a large large oak tree. This oak tree was so old and the branches were so wide that many animals would come in the evening to sleep under it. Sheep would come, ducks would come, lions would come. But the rule of the tree was that we are all friends. So the lion didn't eat the sheep... That is the beginning of a story. You make a big story. What is it? It's nothing but a pattern.

When you imagine a story or when you imagine your past or when you imagine your future, these are all patterns. They have a feeling tone – you feel something with the story they bring about – but nothing is established. So this is very important; there's nothing there to get rid of.

As with my pan with the hot handle, I have to lift it the right way. If you fall into the story and you believe it, then you become imprisoned. If you don't believe it and you try not to get involved, then you don't have much of a life because imagination is part of life. But you have to know that imagination is imagination; it doesn't make reality but it makes the ILLUSION of what we might take to be reality.

When I talk, I am sharing illusions with you. All dharma is illusion because everything which arises from the ground is an illusion, a magical apparition. That's what Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha, says. It doesn't mean that it's nothing at all, but it means that it's an ILLUSION of PATTERNING.

When we take our meditation out into the world (because we have the view which we have been looking at) it is to see your own falsity. Then we have the meditation, which is to stay present and allow the dissolving of the invested energy in your falsity. And then you have activity. Who is doing your life? Of course a quick answer is: *I do it, this is my life, I go to the shops, I talk to people, I write things, I read things.* There is a doer of the activity, this is the understanding of samsara. This is the basis of karma.

Verbs are verb-ing

When you're sitting in the meditation, a lot is going on and you're not doing it; thoughts are coming and going, sensations come and go, memories come and go, plans come and go IN YOUR MIND. So it feels like me but I didn't do it, I didn't ask these thoughts to come, I didn't make these thoughts come, they just arrived, but they seem to arrive in my mind.

To go back to Garab Dorje's first point... see your awareness as it is which is to say, naked, raw and not a thing. If it's naked this means it's not covered. So when you start to think about who is speaking and you interpret that as being yourself, this conclusion becomes a covering to the fact that words flow through us.

Speaking is speaking, that's grammatically very odd but it's the verb that's verb-ing. The doing is doing, there isn't a doer doing the doing. The doing is the doing, speaking is speaking, walking is walking, sleeping is sleeping. Each of you has to look for yourself and see that this is true. Your phone rings, you pick it up and some friend says, *hello* and you start to talk, *oh*, *hi! I hadn't heard from you for a while.* The words come through you, you didn't know you were going to say that. You didn't plan what you were going to say, you found yourself speaking. Who is speaking? Your individual personal identity is the vehicle or the medium through which the non-dual connectivity is arising.

Remember the three: the openness, the field of clarity and the energy of connectivity. In this bright field of emergence, the phone is ringing, you pick up the phone. *Hello!* You hear the sound coming in your ear, you start to speak and your conversation is moving. This is a pulsation, who is speaking to whom? You can give a story but the actuality is sound is coming into you, sound is coming out of you, sound in, sound out. It's pulsation. Who is doing it? It's happening. It flows through you. You are the site. You are the situation. You are the medium for the movement of the energy of all the buddhas.

When we start to study dharma maybe we first learn about Chenrezi. Chenrezi is white in colour, usually depicted with four arms, sometimes with many many arms, looks very smiley, very clean, nice ornaments. Chenrezi is the manifestation of the compassion of all the buddhas. *Oh, so who is Chenrezi?* He is the manifestation of the compassion of all the buddhas. *Yeah, but who is he really?* He is not anyone; the compassion of all the buddhas manifests as Chenrezi. So when Chenrezi speaks, all the buddhas speak through Chenrezi. When Chenrezi smiles, all the buddhas smiles are from Chenrezi. *Oh, okay. So what about Manjushri?* He's got a sword, he's somebody who decides things. Manjushri is the presence of the bright wisdom intelligence of all the buddhas. *Yeah! but who is he?* Oh! he is a manifestation of the bright intelligence of all the buddhas. *But what does he actually do?* He manifests the bright wisdom intelligence of all the buddhas. *But what does he actually do?* He manifests the bright wisdom intelligence of all the buddhas. Manjushri is not a person. Chenrezi is not a person. Padmasambhava is not a person. And you are not a person! The thought that you are a person is a confusion.

Even in the theravada tradition, they would say that the *pudgala*, the personhood is a manifestation of the five skandhas. The five skandhas operate together: form, feeling, perception, association, consciousness. Their tumbling around manifests as you. You are this tumbling. You are these five factors moving together, you are not anyone. You are absence of inherent existence – dependent origination.

So you can analyse these things from the outside and you can see that the belief in an independent individual self is false.

In dzogchen, we do it directly by observing the moment of manifestation and here you are, ever-changing. If you're not doing it, who is doing it? 'Who is doing it' is an anxious question, *Somebody must be doing it!* Who's in charge? Nobody's in charge. Non-duality means no-one has to be in charge because it's collaborative.

Activity: how we participate in the world as the co-emergence of the ground

We are very lucky not to live in America just now but we can learn from America because their president, Donald Trump, is a very wonderful manifestation of the demented ego. He is clearly somebody who needs to have attention 24 hours a day. He has to be special, he is special when he's sick, he is special when he's healthy – *all the cameras on me, look at me, look at me.* He is somebody with a hole in the bucket. No matter how much attention he gets, it drains away. He cannot metabolise attention and love and concern. So he's like an angry sibling, a small child who's got a big brother and he believes big brother gets all mom's love, so he's always poking mom, *do you love me! vote for me!* It's so sad. This guy is a little mad, he'll do anything to get attention.

However this is very helpful for us because he shows the nature of the ego. The ego self is always emptying because the ego cannot hang on to what it has because it doesn't exist; it's an illusion. The ego is always devouring the world to get more and more attention. This is the pathway of all dictators. You become a dictator because you want to have the whole country worried about who you're going to put in prison next and if you're going to send people off to the gulag or to the concentration camp! That's what dictators do. They are like a demonic form of the buddhist mandala.

In a buddhist mandala, you have the central figure who's called the *kyil* [Tib. sKyil], meaning the chief, the boss. Around him you have these other supportive figures. It's like a royal palace with the the king or the queen at the centre and then all the courtyards. In a mandala, however, there are no people since all of these forms are forms of energy. Padmasambhava is the energy of the mind of all the buddhas of the three times. He's not a person. Tara is not a young girl. Dorje Phagmo is not some crazy woman. These are not people. We are not people. There are no people. There are no dogs or cats or whales or buffaloes. There are appearances of emptiness and when you grasp at them, you project inherent existence onto them.

Activity is how we participate in the world as the co-emergence of the ground. If you pull activity back to you and you say, *I am walking, I am talking, I am doing this* and you don't recognise that this is sound and emptiness, this is thought and emptiness, if you make it solid and real, then you put yourself in the prison. What is very important is to see here is that you don't have to change anything, it's not that there are bad things to be removed and good things to be added.

Even if you are full of very oppressive habitual thoughts, these thoughts are empty. They cannot catch you because you don't exist. *Okay, so then who gets caught?* A thought gets caught, the thought of you. For example, you suddenly realise that you've treated someone very badly in your life and you feel remorse, *Why was I so unkind.* 'I was so unkind' is a pattern which arises. If you go back and you saw that person again, they might say, *These things happen, never mind!* But now you think, *I was so bad.* This is the story I'm making.

The glues that stick thoughts together

Thought after thought... they come so fast... they don't stay together long enough. I need to get some glue. What is my glue?

Guilt is a wonderful glue. The 'I did that' glues yourself onto this bad action. Shame is also a very wonderful glue. Oh God, if anyone knew that, they wouldn't like me. Dorje Sempa, help me, help me, help me, I'm so bad! Dorje Sempa says, For goodness sake, how many baths do you need? I sit on the top of your head, I piss on you and you still don't get clean! What's the matter with you? It's because of my glue... I'm a bad boy. No, it's a glue. It's subject and object duality. Not only do they go separate, subject and object go apart, but it's a terrible bad relationship, I can't live with you, I can't live without you... Subject and object come togetherglue, glue, glue, hate, hate, hate. You know this for yourself, this is how your mind is operating. But don't change anything. When this is occurring in your mind, this is the drama of the unfolding of the patterning of energy.

The Tibetan buddhist pantheon has such a variety of deities. Wrathful gods, gods surrounded by flames, trampling on demons, wearing necklaces of skulls, who have blood in their mouths, great skull cups full of blood... Scary! There are very sexy goddesses. Some male deities have an erect penis. All kinds of erotic, violent, seductive, peaceful and kind deities. Every flavour. Hundreds of peaceful and wrathful deities representing every possible patterning of life. So however you are, this is also the divine emergence of the beauty of the ground. In dzogchen, we don't talk about it as divine so much. That's more the language of tantra, but it's the same principle: there is only one ground, the ground is open and pure, and everything which arises is just that energy. If you think that it's

good, you can't hang on to it because it's vanishing. If you think that it's bad, you don't need to get rid of it because it's already going.

How you split yourself into subject and object

You think you are very bad. That's a thought; the thought lasts two seconds and then it's gone. Then you think it again, you think it again, you think it again. You are calling the world into creation. This is the perverse creativity of the desire for something to exist when it doesn't exist. So you have to try very hard to turn the natural clear light of the mind into a sticky swamp that you can sink into. This is big activity: how to beat yourself up? By splitting yourself into subject and object and then you can say, *I hate myself*.

In Britain teenage suicides are increasing every year. Why? Because they hate themselves. You have to wonder, how is it possible that a 12 year old girl can hate herself. *I hate my body, I hate my body.* Wow, what is that? In that terrifying moment, you see this is duality, this is a subject taking themselves to be an object. And now the subject says, *I am trapped in this stupid body, that's why I'm not going to eat.* This person might only be weighing 15 kilos which is very very light but they still insist on not taking any food. *I am too fat, I am too fat.* The mother says, *no.* The father says, *no.* The doctors say, *no, please you're going to die, you have to eat.* But the person says, *no, I'm too fat, only I know the truth about me.* This is so interesting because this is also the flavour of the ego.

If I believe what you say about me, then you have access to me in a way that I don't. If I listen to what you say about me and I trust that and believe it, then I am co-created with you (which of course we are, we are co-created in our family when we grow up.) But when the girl says, *I'm not going to eat*, what she's saying is: *I am me and I'm going to decide who I am!* This is a complete madness because energy is always moving together. To try to draw a circle around yourself and say, *I stand apart from the world* – you can see how many psychiatric disorders arise from this.

Ego is part of the interplay or the manifestation of energy, it's a character in a play. It has no truth. When you go to the theatre and the curtain opens and two or three people are on the stage and they start to interact, you are pulled into or invited into, a belief that they are who they say they are. They are not that. They are actors, they're doing this in order to put food in their mouths and because they like acting. But we have to believe that they are the character on stage.

So yes, we can believe in things which are not true. This is the same with the ego. You believe that the ego is true. And then in this perverse drama of samsara you maintain the false identity of the ego and resist awakening to the true identity of awareness. It is make-believe, it is pretending, it is as if. We have a huge capacity to do that. This is the creativity of the mind and is referred to in Tibetan as *rigpai tsal*. This is the energy of awareness which arises as a potential. Just like with my pan if you take it the wrong way, if you grab the hot handle, then you say, *This is me, everything that happens is the proof I exist*.

However if you take it carefully, you say, *everything that happens happens*. I'm here aware of what is happening. I am aware that words are coming through me. I am aware that my hands are moving. It's not that I'm moving my hands, my hands are moving. I don't know why they move. Words are coming out of me, I'm aware of that. Who is making the words come out of me? Not me! Not me! I'm not doing it, I'm aware, it's coming out of me. 'I' in its simplicity is awareness. The movement of formation is the energy of manifestation in the field of manifestation.

I am talking like this now because I'm looking at a little green light on the top of my laptop. In about 23 minutes, I will stop doing this. I will close the laptop and go for a walk and get some fresh air. But at the moment in relation to the laptop, I'm doing this. It is a situational emergence. I emerge into the situation and do this. It's not intrinsic. This is not who I am. This is the energy of my hope to have connectivity with you. Because who you are is the potential of connectivity and if we can engage in mutual connectivity together, we dissolve this sense of being an isolated monad – a thing which exists by itself.

This is the whole basis of dharma transmission whether it's an initiation or a transmission or Theravadin teaching, it's always the same. Don't be apart. Be part of this. You are already part of this so don't isolate yourself. Ignoring is isolating. Awareness is integration. It's already integrated.

The Result

Fully relaxed into openness

This brings us to the the fourth aspect which is the result. You have these two lines that we've been looking at. 1) You have the ground, the path and the result. 2) You also have – as a division of the path – the view, the meditation, the activity and the result. The result is the same in both. The result is that we are fully relaxed into openness.

We lose openness by tensing. We have tension in our muscles, we have tension in the vibration of our prana system. We have the tension of emotions. Desire is a particular kind of tension. Anxiety is another tension. Pride, jealousy and all the other kind of emotions like shame, confusion, regret, remorse – all of these are tensions. They're a kind of tuning of something. You're not really relaxed, you're sort of buzzing with something.There is no need to get rid of this; let the vibration vibrate and it passes. Don't block the arising and don't block the vanishing. The problem comes when you interfere, when you try to change it, when you think it should be different.

However you are, is the manifestation of the ground

How can it be that dzogchen teaching says to relax and be aware even when I'm full of anxiety. What am I then? An anxious buddha? Why not? You have an angry buddha. You have a sexy buddha. Why not have an anxious buddha! Why not? We think that buddhas are good and being anxious is bad. We don't like to be anxious but maybe the buddha likes to be anxious. Maybe you can have a depressed buddha. *No, you can't have a depressed buddha because that would be bad. Depression is bad and happiness is good. So, only positive, happy hopeful buddhas?* Why? Now you have a polarity; you have manic happiness and you have sad depression. Bipolar disorder people say that they would *rather be manic than depressed. Usually manic causes a lot more trouble but anyway, it's better than being depressed.* These are polarities.

If you stay present with the anxiety, it will vanish. The wrathful buddha isn't angry all the time. It's not that there is some person who is angry. This is a manifestation of energy. You have 21 forms of Tara. Tara can be peaceful. She can be encouraging. She can be a bit annoyed. She can be very angry. This is you. Padmasambhava has eight main manifestations – sometimes like a monk, sometimes like a lover, sometimes very fierce – this is you. However you are, is the manifestation of the ground.

If you enter into judgment, and you say, I'd like to be a buddha but this bit of me is not quite right. I need to get a buddhist plastic surgery, a bit of botox and get my boobs lifted and now I'm a proper dancing dakini. This is not the path of dzogchen. It is as it is. But it's not right. According to what criteria?

This is the thing you have to return to again and again: what are the criteria I use for evaluation? *Oh, the buddha is kind, the buddha is always good, the buddha always l listens to me.....* Who says? This might be what you learn in primary school when you're six years of age and it makes you feel happy and nice. But you're no longer six years of age, now you're grown up. Now you have to face the truth.

In the higher tantras, we offer the buddha all sorts of things, urine, faeces, blood... Why do we do that? Because shit is also good for the buddha. Why? Because the buddha has equanimity. Equanimity means equal, it's the same. *No but still, chocolate would be a much better thing to offer than these horrible smelly things.* For whom? The reason that dharma includes this is to give you a slap and say, wake up, now you're stuck inside your little framework of interpretation. *I know what is what! Chocolate is good and shit is bad. I know this is true.* IT DEPENDS.

Judgment, ideas, positions, good, bad, right, wrong, high, low, dharma, not dharma, holy, not holy – this is the operation of the mind under the power of duality. It's not saying that you should eat shit. It's not saying that you should get to a state where you don't know the difference between shit and chocolate. They are different. It's saying that they are both empty. The emptiness is the quality of the ground which manifests as these different qualities. One is chocolate, one is shit. Both are empty. The fact that you like chocolate doesn't make chocolate real, and the fact that you don't like shit doesn't make it unreal. Both are illusion. But illusion has qualities. In terms of the result, this is why the buddha manifested in these different ways – because different people respond to different things. If you're following the path of tantra, you finish your ngondro and then you have a yidam practice. Sometimes the yidam is standard for the lineage. But very often the teacher says, *which deity are you drawn towards, what is speaking to you.* It may be some particular deity that's not even in your guru's lineage. Then you have to go and see another lama and get that initiation. If that is your yidam, if this is the form of the divine which is resonating with you, then it's very important to do that because, then it's a love marriage rather than a kind of arranged marriage. You have to feel longing and desire and admiration for the deity. And that has to do with the qualities of emptiness.

You can't say that Chenrezi is better than Tara, or Tara is better than Dorje Phagmo. It's not a competition. But it may be that Dorje Phagmo is better for you than Tara, that you have a kind of fit. It is relational. It is vibratory. There are many many dharma groups. There are many dharma teachers. People travel around, they try a bit of yoga, they try a bit of this. Sometimes eventually they find a setting with people where they feel at home, it's their sangha. They have a sense of belonging; this rings true for a while. Then teacher dies, the sangha falls apart, some new permutation occurs. This is energy.

The result is the three kayas

Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya

The result is the three kayas. The three kayas are:

1) <u>Dharmakaya</u>: the dharmakaya which is the mind of the buddha which is bright rigpa awareness inseparable from space.

2) <u>Sambhogakaya</u>: the sambhogakaya is the aesthetically sensitive responsivity of the qualities of the field.

In the field, there is shape – there is chocolate. We may imagine that the Chenrezi is drawn to the chocolate and that Dorje Drolo is perfectly happy with the shit. This depends on how you are, what you resonate with. Neither is true. Neither has intrinsic reality. There is no intrinsic reality in anything. It is vibration. It's harmony. It is empathic attunement. Sambhogakaya, as it manifests for you, will manifest with your particular aesthetic sensibility.

Some people are drawn to being monks or nuns. Some people are drawn into very sexualised existence. or very lazy existence. or very scholarly existence... Whatever it is doesn't matter as long as it is grounded in the ground and so is open and empty. If it's egoic – if it's like a boomerang that you do something to get a reward, if it's all about me – then it becomes demonic. If it's all about you (the other) this becomes too sacrificial. In dharma, it's non-dual. It's neither all about you nor all about me. It's the interplay, the movement occurring.

3) <u>Nirmanakaya</u>: From the sambhogakaya arises the nirmanakaya. The nirmanakaya means like a magical apparition, it appears. Your body is a magical apparition, it arises as sensation, as different ways of responding. Your body is unpredictable. Suddenly you find that you don't want to eat any more spinach, you don't want to eat any more kohlrabi, you only want to eat broccoli. So then you eat broccoli every day for a week and then you say, *Oh*, *no more broccoli! From now on I'll eat carrots!* Like that, the mind is moving across with these different things. Describing that we arise as illusion is another way of saying, *Don't take yourself too seriously.* If you take yourself seriously, then you hammer yourself into this density of, *This is who I am, this is what I'm like and this is how I should behave.*

Traditionally in Tibet, many of the teachers of dzogchen were considered to be quite high lamas, and so everybody would be very nice to them. One of the things that many of these lamas would do was to start being very rude and unpleasant. They would insult other people and then people wouldn't like them. That would be like a holiday for them. Rather than everybody saying with folded hands, *La so, Rinpoche, La so,* they decide to keep away from that Lama. Then the lama would have the experience of people not liking them. If everyone likes you all the time it can get annoying or boring. It's too idealising. It's ridiculous. So you want to have some salt, some pepper, some mustard and some chilli. You want to have different flavours. So we are lucky, we are ordinary people. We all have people who don't much like us. *You don't like me!* What does that mean? It simply means that you don't like me. It doesn't mean that I'm bad, nor does it mean you're bad. *You like me.* Yes, for a while... for a while! It's impermanent. *You like me for a while. I love you for today.* This is activity moving as the result. It's not consolidating, not building up an empire. The function of moving is connectivity.

So we have these three: 1) the open dimension (the face [ngo-wo] is an example) 2) the complexion, and 3) the energy. That's the dzogchen that we are talking about, these three kayas: the openness of the dharmakaya, the radiance of the sambhogakaya and the connectivity of the nirmanakaya.

Rather than examining 'who am I?' we are interested in 'how am I with you?' WHO? takes us into some fixed definition, whereas HOW? takes us into co-emergence. The nirmanakaya is co-emergent.

Texts describe how the nirmanakaya can also operate in terms of making a bridge over the river where there is no bridge. Or it can manifest as a tree in the desert if somebody needs shade. These examples are to show that energy manifests according to the need. Which means, if you track it back – because the dharmakaya is not fixed – that this openness opens the potential of the field of display.

'Ungraspably open and empty' is inseparable from 'ungraspably open and full', which is our potential. We can be friendly or not so friendly, we can be joking and laughing or very serious. We have myriad forms. That's like the sambhogakaya radiating out. The precise form, this person in this situation, that is the nirmanakaya. To say, *The nirmanakaya is the lama and this is the lama's name and they have a throne in this monastery. They are like this and they grew up in Tibet…* this is all bla bla, this is not the nirmanakaya. This is a story.

The nirmanakaya is moment by moment manifestation, fresh from the ground. It is ungraspable. You also can manifest in this nirmanakaya mode. The way to do that is not to consolidate yourself, not to come to an opinion about yourself, not to define yourself, and not to let other people define you either.

Co-emergence/plasticity: to be with every situation

People are more aware now of the extent and the variety of domestic abuse. Many men want to control women by defining them and telling them who they are. There is a feminist movement now to get men to allow women to be the way they are. Women have always been the way they are and that's okay but what if *How you are makes me unhappy?* Well, why should I think that you are here on this earth in order to make me happy? Maybe the fact that you make me unhappy is also good because now I can taste unhappiness? What an odd lesson: *Thank you darling for giving me the experience of feeling like shit. Bitter love, like bitter chocolate.*

So perhaps you can experience directly that not to control the other allows you to manifest in different forms. Because if you are the boss, if you are the patriarch, if you are in charge, you control the other people and then they never can alter you. You change them but they never change you. So this is a monologic movement and is not the dharmakaya. It's not the sambhogakaya either, nor is it the nirmanakaya. It's an ego, just ego. Patriarchy is the ego territory; it has no virtuous quality at all.

When we think about the result, we have to observe that we also could get lost in that way. The ego trace is present in all of us. Again and again, when we do the practice, we are releasing the habit formations that would take us into being a fixed ego.

Each time you see this dissolving, you say, *I could pull it back and say this is me, OR I can let it go.* You can let it go till you don't know who you are. This is not madness, you don't know who you are and you don't need to know who you are, because you become who it's necessary to be in any situation.

If you are working in a kindergarten with three or four year-old kids arriving each morning, you have not one idea about how the day is going to develop. You know that they need to get some milk or orange juice at 11 o'clock, and perhaps a rest in the afternoon. That's all you know. What they're going to do, you don't know. They're running around, they've got emotions and this and that. Some crisis can happen, someone falls over, you have no idea. You are in the service of these little people. You are there to be available and responsible and plastic. This is like an ordinary example of the nirmanakaya. You're not in charge. You're working WITH. You're supporting these young people to have to find their own way to express themselves without harming other children.

This is the quality of the result: not to be in charge, not to be in control but to be available, TO BE WITH, TO BE WITH every situation we meet, so that it's not one dominating the other but joined together, we co-create and co-elaborate our situation.

To Recap

This is a very brief overview of our path in dzogchen. Hopefully it's useful and you can apply it in your life and maybe in future we can actually meet together in person sometime.

Life is very hard. We don't know what the future with this virus is going to be. There's a lot of loneliness around, a lot of sadness. No doubt many more people will die and get confused. Many people's businesses will collapse. People who were rich a year ago, can become very poor. We have no idea what the future will be. The virus has shown us that taking refuge in the outer forms of the world is unwise. If you want to find the true refuge, take refuge in buddha, dharma, sangha, then in the guru, deva, dakini, and then dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya.

The most important refuge is taking refuge in your own unborn awareness. Remember Garab Dorje's first point: find your awareness. There are many descriptions of it. The only way to find it is in yourself and when that's clear, everything becomes clear. That will be the best way of surviving. Whatever difficulties come, this is our life. It's not too serious.

It has been a pleasure to spend some time with you and perhaps we meet again. So bye bye.