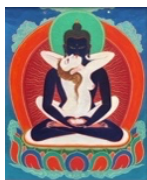


The Aspiration of Pure Discernment. A prayer by Dudjom Rinpoche, Jigtral Yeshe Dorje

Translation and Commentary by James Low¹

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Prepared by Robert Jaroslowski² from a YouTube Transcript

So, maybe we have a bit more time today and we can go into the interesting aspects of this text, but maybe we can start just by doing the Guru Yoga of the White A, relaxing and releasing ourselves from identification with whatever is arising – whether outside or inside. Sitting in a comfortable way with our skeleton carrying the weight, gaze is open into the space in front of us, where we imagine a white letter A surrounded by circles of five coloured light, and then we recite the sound of A three times and open into the open.

So, it's very important always to recollect that we start from space – from emptiness. If you start from your sense of self, your personal identity, then you're endlessly caught up in purification. The belief in a sense of self is a self-deception, but we can also deceive ourselves by imagining that we are free of our belief in a self. Just saying '**non-duality**' doesn't bring us into an altered state. So, you have to be honest about the patterning of your experience as it emerges, and always try to stay on the midpoint: neither believing very strongly in it, nor trying to push it away as something bad. In the Nyingmapa tradition all the nine *yanas*, or vehicles, or ways are practiced. It's not necessary that you start at the bottom and go up step by step, but rather that you apply the approaches of all the different yanas as required by your own shifting mode of presenting. The notion of higher and lower is often very unhelpful.

This short text is by Dudjom Rinpoche who was held by the Nyingmapa in general to be their greatest scholar and the greatest meditator, and he wrote and taught on

¹ See *Lotus Source: becoming Lotus Born*. James Low. (UK, Simply Being, 2021) ISBN: 9781739938123. pp 83-106

² This transcript was compiled by Robert Jaroslowski. May it be helpful for all on the path! The little painting of Samantabhadri/Samantabhadra used at the beginning by courtesy of Holger Utta.

many different approaches to practice. So, when we approached the text, I think it's probably useful to start at the very end, at the colophon because it gives us the background story. I was fortunate to translate this with his guidance, and he also told me this story which is given at the end of the text.

COLOPHON¹

Regarding this work, which is a combination of prayer, repentant confession, and aspiration, one night during the waxing moon of the tenth month of the water-pig year, my wife, Shes-Rab-Ma Rig-'Dzin dBang-Mo, had a dream in which there appeared a lady who had been in her dreams before. This lady said, "*You should now ask Rinpoche to write a prayer.*" and then departed.

Moreover, later, on the night of the tenth day of the same month the same lady appeared and told her, "*You must immediately help to request the writing of a prayer.*" and then she vanished.

I was informed of the dream the next morning but I said, "*Not many people are ready to recite the prayers that already exist, so it's not that there are no prayers at the present time.*" My wife then requested me to quickly write a prayer without being concerned about the length. So then I had the idea to write a prayer since there seemed to be a need for one to request protection from the fears of sickness, famine, weapons and fighting that are prevalent at this time. But it remained only an intention as other things occurred and it seemed less pressing.

However, later on, in the evening of the 10th day of the 11th month, the lady appeared again in my wife's dream and said, "*My request for that prayer is not something of little importance. It is a great necessity.*" So then, on the basis of hearing of that dream, on the morning of the 15th day of that month I had the idea to write something.

Then in the evening of the 14th day of the next month I prayed one-pointedly to Guru Rinpoche and made an aspiration for a very meaningful blessing.

At cock-crow the following morning I had a dream in which I was sitting inside a large building that resembled my temple. Suddenly a white man appeared, young, dressed in white, and with long, flowing ringlets. He was playing cymbals very softly and dancing in the clockwise spiralling steps of the Ging as he came through the door and approached closer and closer to me while chanting these words:

If you want to establish the dharma then plant it in your heart.

When it is in the depth of your heart you will get buddhahood.

If you want to reach the buddhaland then purify your attachment to ordinary confusion.

Happily, the pure buddhaland is right beside you.

Develop diligence in the practice of the essence.

If you do not practise then who will gain the attainments?

It is difficult to look at one's own bad faults.

To really see one's own faults is the one essential point of the dharma instructions.

Gradually purify the errors you have and increase and develop the good qualities you have.

¹ For being able to relate the commentary to the text of the prayer I include the respective verses that are being commented preceding the commentary. It's in different typography to be easier distinguished. RJ

At the end of each line he increased the volume of the cymbals and at the end he departed while playing them very loudly—and due to this I woke up. Immediately on awakening I remembered his words and knew that their meaning concerned the difficulty of training in ‘rejecting and accepting’. Then, with the regret of having seen my sole father, Guru Padmasambhava, directly in front of me and not recognising him, with longing devotion this old father of the rNying-Ma, Jigtral Yeshe Dorje, wrote this in accordance with my vision. May it be beneficial.

Benefit to All

So, he says “Regarding this work, which is a combination of prayer, repentant confession and aspiration, one night during the waxing moon of the tenth month of the water Pig Year, my wife, Shes-Rab-Ma Rig-’Dzin dBang-Mo, had a dream in which there appeared a lady who had been in her dreams before...” and, “... this lady said, ‘*you should now ask Rinpoche to write a prayer*’ and then departed.” So, Rinpoche and all of his children and his partners were very open to having visions of this kind. “Moreover, later on the night of the tenth day of the same month the same lady appeared and told her ‘*You must immediately help to request the writing of a prayer*’ and then she vanished. Dudjom Rinpoche says, that “I was informed of the dream the next morning, but I said ‘*Not many people are ready to recite the prayers that already exist, so it’s not that there are no prayers at the present time.*’”

And, as we know, there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dharma books; even now they’re in our own languages. But how many are actually studied and applied? We get many teachings, but do we apply them? So, he’s pointing to something very important: we talk about doing a practice. The recitation of the prayer is the means by which we unite our mind with the truth that’s presented in the prayer.

“My wife then requested me to quickly write a prayer without being concerned about the length.” So, she asked three times for a prayer, and we know that in the initiation practices and so on we often have to recite our requests three times. The reason that requests have to be made is that the formulation of the request, the feeling of need, of yearning, is itself a bridge between your heart and the heart of the teacher. Because dharma is not an Evangelical system. To talk of dharma to those who are not interested is considered to be a breach of our vows; it is to turn dharma connection into empty gossip, and there’s enough empty gossip in the world.

But Dudjom Rinpoche says, “So then I had the idea to write a prayer since there seemed to be a need for one to request protection from the fears of sickness, famine, weapons and fighting that are prevalent at this time.” I mean, of course, he’s writing this as a refugee in India, having lost all his monasteries and many of his possessions when he had to leave Tibet. “But”, he says, “it remained only an intention as other things occurred and it seemed less pressing.”

So, this is an experience we can understand: we make a big intention that we're going to do some practice, or do some dharma activity, and then life happens and somehow it gets put aside.

Then he goes on, "However, later on, in the evening of the 10th day of the 11th month, the lady appeared again in my wife's dream and said, '*My request for that prayer is not something of little importance. It is a great necessity.*' So then, on the basis of hearing of that dream, on the morning of the 15th day of that month I had the idea to write something."

There's a kind of period of incubation. Gradually the intention is ripening inside him. So, this is also important in terms of our practice. It's important to do the practice, but sometimes we're not in the mood. Sometimes this is just because we're a bit distracted or lazy, or we have a habit of giving up on things. But of course, sometimes we're just not ripe, we're just not available, and then we can end up pushing ourselves, going through the motions, doing it in a somewhat driven, artificial way. So, what he's pointing out is, it's important to listen deeply into the depths of yourself. The true depth of ourself is the *dharmakaya*. So, if we open ourselves to that, what arises is likely to have power of truth, or truthful expression, or truthful intention.

Then he says, "Then in the evening of the 14th day of the next month I prayed one-pointedly to Guru Rinpoche and made an aspiration for a very meaningful blessing."

This is what we also can do; it's not just up to ourselves. Padmasambhava is on our side, is our ally, he is with us, and if we open ourselves to Padmasambhava we will get his encouragement and support and strength.

And he says, "At cock-crow the following morning I had a dream in which I was sitting inside a large building that resembled my temple. Suddenly a white man appeared, young, dressed in white, and with long, flowing ringlets. He was playing cymbals very softly and dancing in the clockwise spiralling steps of the Ging as he came through the door and approached closer and closer to me while chanting these words:..." So, the Ging are the messengers, you can see them painted, and they often have a little flag on the top of their hat. And this messenger said to him, "*If you want to establish the dharma then plant it in your heart.*" So, every word that comes from Dudjom Rinpoche has a very deep meaning! Now we all do our best to bring some dharma out into the world by translating, or publishing, or making images of Padmasambhava and so on, but he's saying that if you're going to do activities like that, first you have to be sure that dharma is planted in your heart. Otherwise there is a danger of inflation, and your motivation gets drawn towards trying to please others or develop a reputation.

Then this form, this messenger form, which is of course a form of Padmasambhava, says, *“When the dharma is in the depth of your heart you will get buddhahood.”* So, if the dharma stays just on the surface of our life as something that we study and remember it will remain within the realm of our dualistic consciousness. The depth of our heart is the unborn openness of the mind itself, it is the *dharmakaya*, so this is our goal: to have dharma as the environment in which we live, dharma as the depth of our heart, dharma as our every movement of our life.

Then he says, *“If you want to reach the buddhaland then purify your attachment to ordinary confusion.”* Because it’s our own obscurations, our own habit formations, our own dualistic tendencies, that make us experience only the ordinary things of our world. We lose the freshness of the immediacy of what is occurring because we cover it over with our own conceptual interpretation. So, here Padmasambhava is saying, let go of your attachment to the thoughts and habits which constitute your ordinary experience.

“Happily the pure buddhaland is right beside you.” So, it’s not that we have to look somewhere else; if we look into ourselves and we find the depth of our mind then the buddhaland is all around us.

“Develop diligence in the practice of the essence.” Although the essence is emptiness itself, if you don’t return to this point of entry to your practice and open again and again into the open – until you have the immediacy of openness within an openness without arising; then we are meditating sky to sky without any obscuration.

“If you do not practice then who will gain the attainments? It’s difficult to look at one’s own bad faults.” So, this is a profound message to us all: being honest about your limitations is absolutely vital if we’re going to make any progress. But it can be difficult to see our own faults. So, it’s important to have people who cannot just fall into an easy alignment with us but will call us out and say, *“Why are you doing this?”*

“To really see one’s own faults is the one essential point of the dharma instructions.” So, this is not in contradiction to Dzogchen teachings: the mind is pure from the very beginning; everything which arises is the radiance of the mind, but we don’t see this. We might have heard the words again and again, but if it’s not the living truth of our experience, then we are in self-deception. If you see your faults clearly, then you see your true nature. So, for example you might become clear, *“Oh, I am lazy!”* So, that’s a useful thing to recognize; then you should try harder. But what is also important is to see that *“I am lazy!”* is also a thought without any inherent existence. So, to see that *“I am lazy!”* as my outer fault and to believe that the thought is true and meaningful and substantial – and that’s my inner fault.

He ends by saying, “*Gradually purify the errors you have and increase and develop the good qualities you have.*” So, if you’re in a valley that’s full of mist in the morning you want mist to thin. Generally that happens when the sun rises in the sky. The stronger the sun is shining, the more rapidly the mist disperses. So, it’s like that with us: we are full of these hazy veils of self-preoccupation. These are purified by seeing that they are false in the sense of lacking any true existence. And among all the good qualities the best is to see the inherent emptiness or absence of true existence in all the phenomena you encounter, including yourself.

And then Dudjom Rinpoche writes, “At the end of each line of each line he (this white man) increased the volume of the cymbals and at the end he departed while playing them very loudly – and due to this I woke up. Immediately on awakening I remembered his words and knew that their meaning concerned the difficulty of training in ‘rejecting and accepting’.” This is a central theme in Buddhist training and practice: to know clearly what is to be accepted and adopted and practiced, and what is to be rejected and left alone. Because as long as we’re not settled in non-duality, with the duality of the world requires us to be very careful. Just knowing that they are empty of true existence doesn’t protect us against the power of our own bad habits.

And then he says, “Then, with the regret of having seen my sole father, Guru Padmasambhava, directly in front of me and not recognizing him, with longing devotion this old father of the rNying-Ma, Jigtral Yeshe Dorje, wrote this in accordance with my vision. May it be beneficial.”

So, if someone as great as a Dudjom Rinpoche cannot recognize Padmasambhava, then this is very likely to happen for us. We might not get a supreme vision of the kind that Dudjom Rinpoche got. But if you do the practice of the Small Rigdzin, then you have the instruction and encouragement to see every appearance as the form of Padmasambhava – the trees, the cars, the cows, houses, everything that appears is the form of Padmasambhava. When you gain the empowerment into the mandala, everything is within the mandala. But as long as we keep relying on our own conceptual habits and our own grasping and selectivity – that this is important and that’s not important – then we don’t see the face of Padmasambhava.

Aspiration for Pure Discernment, the Prayer by which One Recognizes One’s Own Faults and Remembers One’s Refuge, together with A Repentant confession and Rectification and A Very Pure Aspiration to Be Absolutely Clear About What Is to Be Adopted and What Is to Be Abandoned.

Okay, so we start with the title; I read the title and then we have the English. So, this is an “*Aspiration for Pure Discernment, the Prayer by which One Recognizes One’s Own Faults and Remembers One’s Refuge, together with A Repentant confession and Rectification*

and A Very Pure Aspiration to Be Absolutely Clear About What Is to Be Adopted and What Is to Be Abandoned."

We are in living in times where there are many provocations, many encouragements to adopt a very dualistic view whereby we can decide that some people do very bad things and they should be stopped, and we should support people doing good things. But if the people doing good things decide that the best thing to do is to defeat and destroy the bad people, is that virtue? So, that's why this text is concerned with pure discernment. On a profound level we discern that everything has the nature of emptiness, but on a relative level we also have to discern that this world is quite complicated and therefore we should avoid dogmatic positions. But by relaxing and attending to all the details of the experiential field we can act with the optimal alignment with what will be useful.

So he says: [Tibetan recitation]

Buddha Shakyamuni the supreme guide for the universe during this good kalpa, noble bodhisattvas, you assembled sons of the Victor who educate beings, Precious guru, the unsurpassed protector of beings in this debased age, together with the Three Roots and the hosts of dharma-protectors and vow-keepers – with the yearning devotion of one-pointedly remembering you from the depths of our heart we pray again and again to arouse your attention. Due to your kindness, by the power of your unobstructed compassion for your followers, please bless us that our thoughts and intentions may be in accord with the dharma.

So, firstly we homage, we bow to the master – this is Padmasambhava and our own guru. Homage is very important. We have to remember that we follow the middle way which means both/and or both/together: we recall that we are followers of Padmasambhava, we try to maintain our practice as being Padmasambhava; but at the same time we have great devotion to Padmasambhava. We appreciate his qualities, the qualities of our own teacher – so we need to maintain the dignity of our practice, of our visualization as Padmasambhava, and, at the same time, maintain an attitude of humility in the face of the buddhas, the bodhisattvas, gurus, the dakinis and so on, for they are the ones who shine and show us the way.

So it says, "*Buddha Shakyamuni, the supreme guide for the universe during this good kalpa...*" *Kalpa* is like hundreds of thousands of years, and our *kalpa* is called the Good Kalpa, the *bhadra kalpa* because the Buddha is present in it. There are some long periods of times when no Buddha appears and not one word of the Buddha's teachings continues. So, most of our dharma is coming in the line of Buddha Shakyamuni. He is our supreme guide because he taught on every different level, from encouraging us to think about emptiness to recognizing the nature of our mind.

Then, *"...noble Bodhisattvas, you assembled sons of the victor who educate beings..."* The sons of the Buddhas are the Bodhisattvas. They are the spiritual sons of the victorious ones. The Buddha is not victorious over other people, he is victorious over his own limitations, and victorious over the habitual tendency to take the limitations of others seriously. That is to say, he doesn't get pulled into situations. So, in the example I've offered many times: once, when Buddha Shakyamuni was out begging, he came to a hut, and he stood quietly in front of the open door with his begging bowl, and a man came out and he started shouting at the Buddha, *"You lazy beggars, you come here wanting food; you don't work... shut up and go away!"* And the Buddha bowed to him and said, *"I came requesting food, not anger; please keep your anger."* And he turned and walked away. Perhaps most of us would not have remained calm in such a situation. We might have tried to justify why we were begging, or had a vibration of anger ourselves, feeling attacked by this angry man, but the Buddha remains calm and clear – that's why he is the victor.

So he's saying, all you Bodhisattvas who are the sons of the Buddha, you who educate beings – in this Bodhisattvas educate beings by controlling them, that is to say, they show us how to be disciplined. If we study Dzogchen and Mahamudra, we can have a sense of the spontaneity of manifestation arising from the ground, and this is true, but we still need to have the discipline of non-distraction, the discipline of mindfulness, the discipline of ethics. When we say the Seven Line Prayer [to Padmasambhava] we say, *"We want to be like you, we want to follow your path – Khye kyi je su dag drub kyi – I will do in accordance with the way that you live."* Padmasambhava had a lot of discipline; he knew many, many things, he had gone on many pilgrimages, he had opened himself to train with many dakinis and so on.

It's not that the discipline is the opposite of freedom – discipline is a basis for freedom, until you are free of identification with negative patterns.

And then he says, *"...Precious guru, the unsurpassed protector of beings in this debased stage..."* This is Padmasambhava, but it's also our own teacher. If you have a teacher you can relate to them, you can ask them questions, you can learn from them, you can observe how they behave, how they respond to situations and so on. Many gurus exist in the world, but if you don't meet them and they don't talk with you, they are not functioning in your existence. This 'debased time', which is like tea leaves in the bottom of a pot which have been used several times – this is the time of the dregs where all the good flavour has been washed out – then it's especially important to seek the protection of someone who can see you and help you.

And the next line is saying, *"Together with the Three Roots and the hosts of dharmaprotectors and vow-keepers –..."* – the great guru is there along with the three roots,

which are the guru, the meditation deities and the dakinis, along with the dharma protectors, like the great dharma protections like Mahakala and Ekajati, and the vow keepers; these are usually the more local protector deities who made a vow to Padmasambhava, when he came to Tibet. At first they were opposed to Padmasambhava because they were the local gods of the traditional worship of the mountains and the rivers and so on; and when the king Trisong Detsen was trying to have the monastery at Samye built under the guidance of the great Indian scholar Shantarakshita, these local, at night time, were pulling down the walls that had been built up during the day. And Padmasambhava was able to draw them towards him with his meditation power and force them to show their seed syllable on their chest, and then he incorporated that in a mantra and they took a vow to protect, and so they are now on the side of dharma.

So, towards all these beings which have been mentioned, *“With the yearning devotion of one-pointedly remembering you from the depths of our heart we pray again and again to arouse your attention.”* So, this is showing very clearly why we recite prayers of aspiration, the Seven Line Prayer, the Prayer in Seven Chapters and so on; there are so many prayers... Why do we say them? We want their attention, we need them. So, this is like a three-year-old child that comes into the parents’ bedroom at four o’clock in the morning and says, “Get up, play!” “Because it’s too early, go back to bed, go back to bed!” “No, you have to get up!” And then eventually the parents think, okay I’m awake now, so let me get up and play. So, we want something. You don’t need to worry about upsetting the Buddhas by praying in the night and the day, praying with tears in your eyes – it is our need, our desperation, which gets through to them.

Every religion is full of followers who are just going through the motions, whether they go to the church or the synagogue, wearing their fine clothes – they’re not really adopting what they hear. But when we take the dharma to heart, when we know that we are going to die, that we don’t know when we’re going to die, that we’re easily distracted – then from our heart we say, “Please, help me! Save me! I need you, you are the ones I need!” So, it’s this quality of yearning and necessity, which awakens the heart of all the Buddhas.

And then we say, *“Due to your kindness, by the power of your unobstructed compassion for your followers, please bless us that our thoughts and intentions may be in accord with the dharma.”* You have this power. You are truly relational and available because you are kind. You don’t mind being interrupted by those who are needy, and your compassion for your followers is unobstructed. It is profound and vast and equally available for all. The Buddha’s kindness and compassion and willing to help us is not based on an evaluation of our qualities. Their love and compassion is inseparable from their

equanimity. And we are praying for something specific: *“Please bless us (so) that our thoughts and intentions may be in accordance with the dharma.”*

So, we have to think; for example with climate change: we want to help protect the climate, so that the animals and the people and so on are not affected by storms and fires and rising water levels. So, if we get frightened maybe you have a house near the sea, and you get frightened that it will get flooded, then obviously you might pray, “I want to protect my house, please keep me safe!” But of course, we have to consider, is that really in harmony with the dharma? Well, there are many people all across the globe whose houses and livelihood are in danger of rising sea levels. So, again we follow the middle way: it’s not that I pray for me and forget the others, or, that I pray for everyone else and forget myself, but we are all together. So, when we pray we imagine that our enemies or those we don’t like are in front of us, our friends are behind, the lineage from our father’s side, all his family and all their relatives, is on the right, from our mother’s side is on the left. Because again and again we have to observe how the focus of our attention and our care and our value shrinks into specific people. All around us we see the rising power of nationalism, where people think, we, the inhabitants of this country are good, but our neighbours are no good, they are our enemies – and this is giving rise to wars and conflicts in many places.

So, for our thoughts and intentions to be in harmony with the dharma they have to be centred in our bodhisattva vow, that is to say, the primary focus for my life is to work for the benefit of others, and in order to do this I need to gain the wisdom that sees the emptiness of every form which arises. It’s only by truly seeing that there is no inherent existence in any sentient being that we can avoid entering into judgment and ranking people in hierarchies according to their appearance, or their health, or their wealth. In the relative truth every society has hierarchies, whereby they evaluate the relative worth of humans, or animals, or possessions.

If we’re operating with the kind of items that speak to us, then their value seems obvious and different. So, suppose you want to buy a new car. You go to the showroom the manager comes out with a big smile: “I have the perfect tractor for you.” “I’m not a farmer, why would I have a tractor?!” “Ah, but it’s the best tractor!” “That’s wonderful, sell it to a farmer, but I want a car!” Now, if the next person who comes in is a farmer, then he may be extremely interested in the best tractor. For the farmer it’s obvious that there are different kinds of tractors, and they have different qualities, and these are all important to know. If you live in the city, you say, “Oh, really, that doesn’t interest me; I’m sure they’re all good but nothing to do for me.”

This is why in situations where you become fearful, or anxious, or worried, that’s when your own internal hierarchies often become more visible to you. Then you see

what really matters to you, and then you have to see, oh, is this in accordance with dharma – or am I following the same frame of reference as my parents, my school teachers, my government and so on? So, it's very important: when you read this kind of prayer, not just to shoot across the surface of the words but try to see how they might be speaking to our own lives as they are.

Break

So, what is vital for practice is trust – faith, devotion and trust. Because a lot of the teachings of dharma are very different from the cultural beliefs we've inherited, or the kind of ways that we normally think about our world. So, if we receive a teaching that your mind is empty from the very beginning, but your own experience is that you're always full of thoughts and memories and plans, then you come to a crossroads: either dharma is wrong or I'm wrong. So, I've been me a long time and I quite like myself, so maybe dharma is not for me. Over the years I've met many people who have been 'interested' in dharma, but somehow it didn't become their life, it was a kind of add-on, padded around the structure of their existing beliefs. But for those who deeply come into dharma and for whom it becomes their way of life, then they have to have full belief without doubt in the truth of what they're told and what they have to do.

So, when we went to look through the end piece, the colophon of the text, Dudjom Rinpoche highlights, oh yes, this is about accepting and rejecting. So, that's based on two functions: trust and doubt. So, I need to trust the dharma and doubt myself.

Many things in this world seem important to our ego-self, but they are not truly important. So, a text like this is very useful for us to do a little review of how much devotion we can feel. We're all aware of the power of distraction – that our mind can be pulled this way and that, even although we just want to focus. So, we can practice shamata meditation and mindfulness, but these practices are a little bit cool. Whereas with tantra we have devotion, and devotion is a hot emotion. It allows us to pull our energy together into our heart, so that with an energized, one-pointed attention we can keep any distraction at bay. So, in the text he now goes on to describe how easy it is for us to get lost.

[Tibetan recitation] That means: "*Due to former actions performed without grasping we have gained this precious human existence.*" As we saw in the *Radiant Aspiration* about the Butter Lamps, everything arises on the basis of previous causes, and we are fortunate we've gained this precious human existence, a contact with the dharma, opportunities to practice.

Due to former actions performed without grasping we have gained this precious human existence. Due to our merit that is by no means small we have met with the holy dharma. Our guru has permitted us, his followers, to gain initiation, blessings and instructions. This is the time when we have the jewel right in our own hand, and yet, our minds, like frivolous monkeys, are completely unstable and so we go under the power of the misleading negative forces and demons. We have no power to utilise this jewel which is our very own, so the instructions we received on the freedoms and opportunities are just thrown away.

"Due to our the merit... (we've accumulated, which is not in any way)... small we have met with the holy dharma. Our guru has permitted us, his followers, to gain initiation, blessings and instructions..." So, the door has opened for us: we can access the depths of the dharma understanding. So, *"...This is the time when we have the jewel right in our own hand, and yet, our minds, like frivolous monkeys, are completely unstable, and so we go under the power of the misleading negative forces and demons."* When we really want something, when we have a lot of desire for it, we can do incredible things to make our dream come true, but if our relation with dharma doesn't have that same kind of deep yearning and excitement; then, like these frivolous monkeys, we just get pulled this way and that, and so, when our mind is not focused, when we are jumping from one topic to another, that creates an entry point for the negative forces which are around us. On an outer form we see, this happens with teenagers. When the children are small, they tend to fit in with the family system and find a way to go to school and so on, but once they start getting a sense of their own freedom, their own opinions, it's easy for them to fall in with bad company, with the other older children who confirm the importance of the negative impulse which is arising in the young person. With this the negative appears to be positive, and we get led astray. So, in the Tibetan way of considering the world, it's not a kind of dead, neutral formation, but it's a force field in which there are strong negative winds or demons, which can definitely get sucked in, if we are distracted, and cause a lot of trouble.

Then, he says, *"We have no power to utilize this jewel which is our very own."* Studying the dharma is not like reading a novel. When you read a novel, you get introduced to the lives of people you can never actually meet. But all the dharma texts are about us. They are illustrating different aspects, maybe limiting aspects or liberating aspects, but they're always concerned with what it is to be me. So, although the dharma teachings are showing me the way to liberation, when we get distracted, these teachings are not activated; the practice book stays on the shelf and we go this way and that, thinking about many things connected with "Do people like me? Do they not like me?", and so on.

So he says, *"...so the instructions we received on the freedoms and opportunities are just thrown away."* We've probably all studied these points again and again: this is a rare

and precious opportunity... Yet, days and weeks and months can go by without us really opening ourselves fully to the dharma. We throw away the true gold of dharma and instead pick up the fool's gold of worldly success. So, this is an invitation for us to reflect on our own life, to do an audit: how much time do we devote to study, to reflection, to meditation? For some people, they study too much, they read so many books, but they don't allow any one of them to become like a guiding light for them. Then, because you know many things 'about' the dharma, you end up having opinions and comparing and contrasting and getting to debating – and there are now so many blog sites, where you can fight with other people about whether emptiness of self or emptiness of other is the most important.

Dharma is about experience, about being absolutely at the centre of our open empty mind, so that everything we do radiates from that. But in your life, how many people will actually remind you of this? That's important to know – we are not living, most of us, in Buddhist countries. So, it requires a strong effort and a focus of attention to maintain that, to maintain the depth and clarity of our practice.

So, then the text continues [Tibetan recitation].

We are now at a real turning point in our lives. Whatever we've requested, whatever we've received, it all seems just like some kind of story. We want to live in accordance with the dharma and be real dharma practitioners, yet our own minds forget what it means to be a pure dharma person. We don't know how to learn about ordinary human values, let alone the view of the buddhadharma, and we have only a vague notion of the sixteen rules of proper human conduct. We feel no shame when we observe the bad things we have done, yet we're hooked on moral indignation when we observe the conduct of others.

So, Dudjom Rinpoche is saying, *"We are now at a real turning point in our lives. Whatever we've requested, whatever we've received, it all seems just like some kind of story."* Very often, when people meet a powerful lama like C.R. Lama, they kind of surf into the dharma on the waves of his energy and power, but then, when he dies, that energy is not available, and gradually the practice texts don't seem to come alive when we do them. And they become something "I used to do...". So, when this happens, we have to pray from the heart, especially with the Seven Line Prayer.

"We want to live in accordance with the dharma and be real dharma practitioners, yet our own minds forget what it means to be a pure dharma person." That is why it's very important to have just one or two dharma practices that you get to know from beginning to end, from top to bottom. So, the text of the *Small Rigdzin* from C.R. Lama has everything you need to be a pure dharma person. That means to read it and study, and if it's not clear, ask questions – and then to do it, to make it alive in you. C.R. Lama used to say, "There is no dharma injection". The teacher can put the dharma soup in your bowl,

but you have to drink it – and then, internally, you have to metabolize what you have taken inside, so that it becomes part of your life.

Then he says, *“We don’t know how to learn about ordinary human values, let alone the view of Buddhadharma, and we have only a vague notion of the 16 rules of proper human conduct.”* So, these are dharma rules for good behaviour, and there’s a note at the end of the text that outlines them. And due to the work arising from Lama Yeshe, who was a wonderful teacher, these 16 principles have been adopted as a model of education for children, which is wonderful. When we look around and we see how much lying and cheating goes on with politicians, with people directing the big oil companies and so on, we see dishonesty and self-deception is everywhere. So, this means, I will have to study to find out my own self-deception. C.R. Lama highlighted this again and again; he would say of himself *“I am liar number one, cheater number one”*. He would say, *“I don’t believe anyone, and number one, I don’t believe myself”*. He’s saying, it’s not the kind of theatre where we’re pretending to be dharma people.

Dharma is often compared to a mirror which is held up, where we see how we are. When we look in the mirror we see that we are not exactly how we would like to be. It’s very tempting to maintain the illusions that we have about our life, but this won’t really help us. So, it’s very useful to take some paper and write down how you cheat yourself, about how you spend your time, what do you really know about dharma... Sit down and give yourself 15 minutes to write about emptiness. What have you written? Because if it’s not inside you, if it’s not operating inside you, then we’re in self-deception. And so, what is so helpful about this prayer is, Dudjom Rinpoche was the great meditator of the Nyingmapa. He was our highest lama, and yet, he can say this about himself. For most of us our path is not straight like a rocket going up in the sky. It’s a spiral, so we get a little bit of clarity, and then we’re confused, and another bit of clarity... and we just go round and round, going up very slowly. But we need to know this about ourselves.

And then he says, yes but there is a danger because, *“We feel no shame when we observe the bad things that we’ve done, yet we’re hooked on moral indignation when we observe the conduct of others.”* How bad are the faults of others; how big and how easy to see! But our own wrongdoings and laziness and selfishness and so on, they slip away, like a slippery eel. So, this is, when we read this, we have to stop and really use this to see, how am I doing. And the key point is to see, mistakes are normal in samsara. Your entry ticket into this life was stamped: *“Has the five poisons!”* This is what we have. The true nature of these five poisons is the five wisdoms. The point where the five poisons are revealed in their truth as the five wisdoms, that point is the emptiness of

our mind. But as long as we're grasping to appearances as if they are inherently real, we will have no insight.

So then he says [Tibetan recitation].

We don't have a really pure understanding of the ten virtues according to the buddhadharma. Because of partiality in our attitudes towards the doctrines of the one Teacher who taught them all we disparage the dharma and the saintly ones and so accumulate bad karma. Thus through seemingly relying on the dharma we gain only a great burden of sin to carry. We've heard a lot of teachings so we look on ourselves with great pride, yet when we contemplate them, we do not reach a deep understanding of the meaning that is analysed. We would like to adhere to the moral conduct of the hinayana ordinations, yet we act against the four basic points of virtuous practice and totally discard them.

So, he says, "We don't have a truly pure understanding of the ten virtues..." The ten virtues, according to the buddha dharma, concern the actions of our body, speech and mind. The ten virtues essentially are not doing the ten faults. So, the first fault is killing. So, instead of killing beings, killing animals, being in a country where you a lot of money is made from exporting weapons to kill people, we should try to ransom beings and protect them. Vast amounts of money are made from making and selling weapons, so, if you can, make some action – even just writing a letter to your country's leader about the shameful stain on the country by paying for people's health care through weapons that kill other people.

Modern cultures easily bind our lives into the negative deeds of others. For example, now in Britain there's more awareness of how much involvement Britain had in the slave trade, the triangular trade from West Africa to the Caribbean to Britain. It was normalized which meant that it was possible to see the misery in the faces of slaves but not be touched by it. Now we have this with weapons. What's required is to be sensitive to the nature of dependent origination. Although I might feel that I'm a separate individual, the fact that I pay my taxes binds me into the promotional work that the government does to build up certain export industries. This has two aspects: on the one hand, on the relative level, we should do what we can to minimize this national bad behaviour; but on a deeper level we have to see that as long as my mind is operating according to duality, to split between subject and object and to be choosing things which please my ego-self, then I will be pulled into the realm of duality.

Therefore, if I want to really help to stop wars, to stop invasion and torture and cruelty, I have to gain the unchanging clarity of the *dharmakaya*. So, many of us have studied these three brief sayings of Garab Dorje. Are these alive in our heart? Are these the guiding compass, which keeps us clear in every situation? Garab Dorje says, we must open to how our mind actually is. You have to in be introduced by the teacher to

how you are, but then again and again introduce yourself to how you are. That is the way to freedom. So, when we do the Guru Yoga of the White A, this is the great simple method of activating the three statements of Garab Dorje. So, we have translations of Patrul Rinpoche's commentary on these three statements; we should study this again and again, until this becomes how we are.

So then, in terms of the sins of the other mistakes of the body, there is taking what is not given; so instead of that we should give whatever we have to others.

And thirdly, not indulging in excessive sexual behaviour, but keeping within morality. So, the key thing here is, don't use your sexual presence to harm anyone. And linked with this is, if you have an erotic relationship and it becomes full of idealizing romantic fantasies about the other person, you have maybe a good time when you see them, and then you miss them when they're not there, and then you have a good time when you see them – so the function of the relationship is to intensify your hopes and fears. You have to try to see, what is the performative consequence of what we do.

Then we should not tell lies but speak the pure truth. This is difficult. Sometimes we feel that telling the truth will hurt the other person, and we don't want to do that. What is my intention? Is it, that I don't want to hurt them? Or, I want them to like me? So, it's not just a case of following these rules in a simple way because our lives are not simple. We have to think our way into this, to use some analysis of the actual situation.

Then, not using disharmonious speech, but trying to bring people together in harmony. Even in dharma there are different views. If you like one football team and not another, and then you say, "Oh, I like the Nyingmapa, but I don't like the Gelugpa!", this is just another form of narrow-minded discrimination so we have to be able to speak sweetly with everyone and not enter into bitterness because rough words only create more trouble.

Then, idle gossip is unhelpful; it wastes precious time of our life. "How are you? Did you have a good holiday?" Why am I asking this? I'm interested in them. Who are they? They're my friend. Is that your friend with the five *skandhas*? Is that your friend who manifests from a long karmic history? Is your friend an illusory phenomenon? "No, my friend is my friend." So, your kind, good heart, appreciating the qualities of your friend, extracts any dharma understanding from your mind.

So then, the important thing is not to be greedy and to learn to be satisfied with very little. In a capitalist, consumerist culture, it's very easy to accumulate many things which are actually functionally just clutter.

And if other people say things which hurt us, we should not bear ill will, develop a negative interpretation of that person, but concern ourselves with benefiting others.

Retaliation and revenge are against the dharma. It is not for us to punish other people. If people lie to us or cheat us, they are doing something bad, so we should light a candle for them and say some prayers for them. Again, you're at a crossroads: why should I help somebody who is harming me? Because the consequences for them of the harm that they do to you are terrible. We take the bodhisattva vow and say, "I will work for the benefit of all beings!" That could mean working for the benefit of the people who hurt me and harmed me and not get pulled into giving back what we have received.

And in the last vow, which is concerned with the mind, is not to hold the wrong views. So, we might say, "Oh, do you know John, he's a really nice man." Is that a wrong view? Is there a John who really exists and who is really good? Probably not. So, when we make assumptions about other people, make conclusions about other people, define other people either as good or as bad, we are solidifying these moving impermanent patterns, which exist within the mandala.

So, sometimes you think, all these ten rules about good and bad behaviour... this is beginner stuff. I know what this is. But if we really apply ourselves to them, they will be a very good method for exposing to us our own underlying prejudices.

And then, he says, "*Because of partiality in our attitudes towards the doctrines of the one Teacher who taught them all we disparage the dharma and the saintly ones and so accumulate bad karma.*" So, without partiality we say, "Oh, my teacher is the best!" It helps you, if you have faith and devotion, and you say to yourself, "My teacher is the best for me; I trust them". But to compare them with some other teacher as if they were apples on a market stall is not helpful. We say, "Oh, Dzogchen is the best path; we Nyingmapas have this!" – it's only the best path if you've done it. And have you followed the other dharma paths? Do you know what they're like? So, you don't know anything about them – why are you judging them?

So, then he says, "*Thus through seemingly relying on the dharma we gain only a great burden of sin to carry.*" We're not really applying the dharma; we're using dharma ideas to give ourselves a certain position, or to feel that we know something, and we burden ourselves with our sinful thoughts, words and deeds, which will manifest later as our karmic accumulation. The word that's translated here for sin is '*digpa*', and this carries the connotation of poison and of scorpion; it's something, like a scorpion, where it flips its tail, it can put poison or this very negative substances into your body. We talk about the five poisons: our mental dullness, the opaque quality, the lack of clarity in our ways of thinking and feeling; our aversion, our desire, our pride, our jealousy – these are poisons because they remove the health and clarity of the mind by inducing this distorting vision.

If you say, “Oho, but it’s all illusion!”, that won’t help at all because sin arises when I take subject to be real and object to be real. My belief that I’m entitled to punish this other person might feel intense and justified, and then I think, “Oh, but it’s illusion!” – there’s no power in this understanding of illusion. The power is in the negative thought. So, we have to watch our mind. Most of the time our consciousness, that’s to say, the dualistic aspect of our mind, is running an endless commentary on everything which occurs outside and inside. When we catch this happening, we should apply any of the antidotes we know. If you can, try to stay present with the impermanence of the thought, and through that we see the self-liberating nature of the thought as it vanishes. Or we can say a mantra, or we can relax in the out-breath, or we can make an aspiration for the person we have pushed into a little cage – say, may they become enlightened, may their Buddha nature shine forth.

Although, if you read Dzogchen books, for example the short texts that are in the *Simply Being*, they say, don’t apply any antidotes. That’s because, if, if!, you are actually inhabiting a non-dual vision of experience, then you don’t need to apply an antidote, you just need to remain present in that openness. But if, if!, I am trapped in my belief that dualistic phenomena are real and separate, then I have to take their particularity seriously, and an abstract overview doesn’t help. For example, I was recently in Poland, and now I’m back in London. If I go into a local shop here and try to pay with polish zloty, they won’t be happy, and if I say, “Ah, but it’s money, it’s just money... you accept money? This is zloty, it’s money!” Then they would truly recognize that I am a fool. So, we have to be very clear about the precise function of the different aspects of our existence.

Then Dudjom Rinpoche says, *“We’ve heard a lot of teachings so we look on ourselves with great pride, yet when we contemplate them, we do not reach a deep understanding of the meaning that is analysed.”* This is a very popular way of cheating oneself: I’ve studied with this lama, with that lama... But is it in your fingertips? Is it with you as you approach any situation? Abstract theoretical knowledge is going to blow away like a leaf in the autumn wind.

“We would like to adhere to the moral conduct of the Hinayana ordinations, yet we act against the four basic points of virtuous practice and totally discard them.” That is to say, our desire for dharma is like a hot wind rising, and we go like a big balloon in the summer, but actually to maintain pure morality we have to struggle with ourselves. Although the true nature of the mind is an original purity which has never been contaminated – the patterning of our dualistic thoughts, they are not pure, they manifest limited positionings, limited attitudes. So, we have to remember the basics, like these four points of virtuous practice: not to hate others even when we are the object of their

hatred; that is to say, I have to live with this uncomfortable feeling that they hate me without retaliating with hatred towards them; not to retaliate with anger even when very angry. When I get angry, I am convinced that you are wrong and that you are bad, “and why do you do that!”, and the feeling that comes up is, I need to punish you. When C.R. Lama was in Tso Pema, at the time when he wrote the *Butter Lamp* prayer we looked at recently, he had gone with his wife into the local town of Mandy to see the local king, and when he came back, they found that somebody had broken into their little... it’s like a little, very small room built onto the rocks, like a kind of a cave... and his wife lost much of her jewellery, and she was upset and said, we have to go to the police. And C.R. Lama’s position was, we don’t need to punish this man; his karma will be punishing himself. That’s a difficult position to maintain. The urge to make the other person bad because they’ve hurt us, is very strong.

So, again, we have to find some deep peace in ourselves. So, if we are quickly angry and hurt, and feel an urgency of retaliation, on an outer level we should do more *shamata*, *shiné* practice and read more to understand karma. For example in the *Finding Freedom* book there is a long section on the nature of karma, with very traditional examples. In that way, when we see we have a difficulty we have to think: what is the medicine that this illness or this sickness requires?

So, then the next section says [Tibetan recitation]. So that is the *lung* for the next section of this, and we’ll return to it after the lunch break. And, it’s always a good time to take our ethical health. We can’t take it by taking our pulse. We have to get to know ourselves: am I kind? Do I have kind thoughts towards others? Do I speak sweetly and encouragingly, with kindness from the heart? Do I do my best to put others at ease, to help them believe in their own buddha nature and potential? That is to say, if I am following the dharma, what change should that be bringing about in how I participate in the world? Do I really attempt to receive other people as they are, seeing clearly all their particular patterns, but without jumping into judgment and formulating strong conclusions? This is very important, especially for people who are not long in the dharma, and they’re coming in interested in Dzogchen and Mahamudra. Because the texts in Dzogchen and Mahamudra don’t say very much about morality. They don’t say very much about developing kindness because their focus is on awakening to non-duality, which dissolves the delusion of a true separation of self and other. That is to say, ethics is implicit in this view of non-duality, but if we are not really inhabiting that non-dual view, then this ethical orientation is not just implicit but invisible, and you can use these teachings to become inflated, to feel that you’re special, to be disregarding of the difficult situations of others. So, when we have a prayer and

aspiration like this one, we should truly apply it to ourselves and not have the words as empty sounds, but really take them into our heart and see what it evokes.

Break

Now we continue with the text. I had read out the Tibetan of it.

We would like to possess the riches of the bodhisattva training, yet the four immeasurable attitudes remain unattainable like a picture seen in a flame. We would like to maintain the tantric samaya vows, yet we don't pay attention to even the first root downfall and discard them all as of little importance. We know how to give verbal explanations of the four attitude changers, yet our attachment to the events of this life expose our continuing involvement with worldly values. We serve the guru yet our respect and devotion gradually decreases. Instead of having pure vision we mistakenly see the Guru as an equal and a friend.

It says, *"We would like to possess the richness of the bodhisattva training, yet the four immeasurable attitudes remain unattainable like a picture seen in a flame."* So, we take the Bodhicitta vow, and we find that there are many aspects to the Bodhisattva training, for example by reading Shantideva's famous *Entering Into the Path of a Bodhisattva*; we realize that there's quite a lot to do, yet even the basic *Four Immeasurable Attitudes* seem unattainable – they flicker in front of us, like pictures seen in a flame.

So, these are the four immeasurables: firstly we say, *"May all sentient beings be happy and have the root of happiness."* This is said to be the definition of love: if you love someone, you want them to be fully happy and to have an absolute basis for that happiness. And then we wish this out for all sentient beings. The root of this happiness is to not be separate from your own original ground – then you see directly that there is nothing about me, nothing in what seems to be the compositional factors of me, which has any true existence.

Secondly, we say, *"May all beings be free from suffering and the cause of suffering."* This is said to be a definition of kindness or compassion – that we have become kind when our concern is that no one anywhere, no sentient being in any realm, suffers or even has within them the root of that suffering. The root of suffering is, not to see one's own ground. If you don't see your own unborn ground, then you imagine "I exist. I am a separate entity!"

Then, thirdly, we say, *"May all sentient beings experience a happiness which is not tainted by any kind of sorrow."* And this also indicates a non-opposition, or a non-duality, between happiness and sorrow. To have such a happiness would mean that the happiness had to be inseparable from emptiness, and also any possible suffering had to be inseparable from emptiness, so that, if you bring these two empty formations

together it's just like seeing two small ponds – in any each of them there is the reflection of the full moon.

Then fourthly we say, “*May all sentient beings rest in perfect equanimity free from the bias of friendship towards those we like and enmity or hatred towards those we don't like.*” So, this is very important. Of course, if I like someone, they seem special to me, they seem to become bigger, or more impressive, than other people around them. So, equanimity would mean that we free ourselves from this vertical axis of saying, this one is better than that one, and instead we have a horizontal plane of diversity: so many kinds of beings, and all are equal in their emptiness. No one is special.

This is a very calm and cool feeling, and this links back to topics we've discussed many times: if we awaken to the emptiness of our own mind, then that is our freedom, and the manifestation which flows out from this is our gesture for the benefit of others – for all others. And the key thing here is that this potential of connectivity is flowing out of us; it diversifies in form according to the basis of the situation – that is to say, it's not determined by the qualities of the other. In this world we tend to like people if their profile, if their shape is harmonious with ours, the qualities they have seem to be particularly important, whereas the qualities of other people don't seem important at all. That is to say, in that situation my point of reference is my ego-self. Deep equanimity is not possible for the ego-self because the ego-self always has a basic intention to survive, to optimize its own benefit, and helping others may be a means to do that – it's a self-referential positioning.

So, these *Four Immeasurables* are vital for our practice. What makes them immeasurable is that they are rooted in emptiness. When we think of someone we knew well, our mother, or father, or children, we have a good sense of their existence, how they are, or how they were, but this image of them that we have is a composite. It is built up from thousands of moments of exposure to movements of the potential, which were underpinning what we call that person. Actually, these people don't exist as anyone; they presented or they were, if you'd like, existing for a moment as one specific formation, but they were not defined by that particular formation. Whatever we want to say about people – their own manifesting will contradict that picture that we develop.

So, the central point is: all sentient beings are ungraspable. It's because we grasp at them as being someone in particular – who can be defined – that we don't awaken to their open fresh potential. So, this is an invitation for us to examine how we thicken the world and make it dense and heavy – because of the projection onto others of concepts and beliefs arising in our mind.

“We would like to maintain the tantric samaya vows, yet we don’t pay attention to even the first root downfall and discard them all as (being) of little importance.” Generally the first ‘root downfall’ of these vows is considered to be denigrating the teacher because the guru is the root of your practice and your understanding, and so, if you insult the guru, you insult your own path and your own clarity.

And he says, *“We know how to give verbal explanations of the four attitude changers, yet our attachment to the events of this life exposes our continuing involvement with worldly values.”* So, we can all talk a little bit about these four thoughts concerning the nature of the precious human birth, karma, impermanence and death, and suffering in the six realms; that is to say, we know the words, but we can’t quite dance to the tune because we don’t hear the tune. We’ve simply got this dull repetition of empty words, and in that way we continue with our interactions with the world, using experience to confirm that we exist.

“We serve the guru, yet our respect and devotion gradually decreases. Instead of having pure vision we mistakenly see the Guru as an equal and a friend.” So, most of us are living in reasonably free cultures, where the power of patriarchy has been a little bit dissolved and there’s more possibility of easy, equal kind of communication. This removes the formal structure that would have existed in Tibet. So, there are fewer external guidelines. But that indicates, we need to have more internal clarity about why we would be respectful, so that at all times we are clear of how much we need the support of the person we take as our teacher. As we looked earlier, totalitarian political structures seem to be more and more prevalent, but if we get a chance to live in a democratic structure, then we have to establish what is a respectful way of interacting, without dissolving any sense of the particular usefulness of the teacher.

The text then says: [Tibetan recitation]

We insult and disparage our vajra brothers and sisters instead of showing them love and kindness. When others say a few bad words to us, instead of showing forbearance, we send them a torrent of curses. The love and compassion of recognising all beings in the six realms to be our own parents vanishes like mist as we do not practise it from the depth of true bodhicitta. We force ourselves to do the practices of the developing and completing systems, but we can’t use them as an alternative to being submerged in everyday confusion. We know that emptiness is the essence of the dharma in both sutra and tantra, yet, not gaining a proper understanding of it, our minds become as stiff and hard as horn.

“We insult and disparage our vajra brothers and sisters instead of showing them love and kindness.” So, generally vajra brothers and sisters means people with whom you have had initiation together on the same day, at the same time, by the same teacher, into the same mandala. So, if you like, they are neighbours in the mandala, and life is much

easier if you're not fighting with your neighbours. But maybe these people behave in ways we don't like; maybe they try to become special with the teacher, or take up a lot of time, and then we want to judge them. Do they exist as something to judge? What we judge is them in relation to me – they don't make me happy, so I judge them as being bad. That's very sad. So, however they are, we turn towards our own mind and maintain an even attitude.

Similarly, *"When others say a few bad words to us, instead of showing forbearance (and patience), we send them a torrent of curses."* So, we see the problem as being in their behaviour, but we have reified them, we have turned this flowing patterning of manifestation into the truly existent person... and we've got the number, we can judge them.

And, *"The love and compassion of recognizing all beings in the six realms to be our own parents vanishes like mist as we do not practice it from the depths of true Bodhicitta."* So, what it is pointing again and again to is, that you have to inhabit the practice, you have to merge your life with the practice, otherwise the initial enthusiasm of behaving towards other people in a specific way will be lost, and you get bored and indifferent and don't do it.

"We force ourselves to do the practices of the developing and completing systems..." – this means visualizing a mandala as arising out of the potential of space, and using the energy of the mandala to dissolve the obstacles which exist inside us, particularly in our channels – but we don't know how to apply them, *"...we can't use them..."*. You could do your Padmasambhava practice every day, but in an intense or a crisis situation you might go back to your traditional habit formations and forget about your practice.

"We know that emptiness is the essence of the dharma in both sutra and tantra, yet, not gaining a proper understanding of it, our minds become as stiff and hard as a horn." So, you can know 'about' emptiness, you can read books on it and repeat them, and it's as if you know something, but again we have the problem that we haven't absorbed the ideas and the teaching right into the marrow of our bones. So, what shall we do? How can I have this dharma alive inside me?

So, in the three-stage process of reading or listening, and then reflecting, and then meditating, the second one is very important for us. Reflecting means to take a dharma idea like impermanence and look at your life and start to see the situations which really highlight impermanence for you. So, again and again, knowledge is not the main thing. Wisdom, or awareness, or presence, is what we need. I'm present in emptiness, with emptiness, as emptiness – then we see, *"I am ungraspable"*, which means nothing you say about me, whether it's praise or blame, can touch me. And then I get a genuine

freedom from duality and the anxiety that I'm going to be judged for doing something wrong. We have to really taste emptiness, and this is not so complicated... As you're sitting now, thoughts are arising and passing – it's not difficult to see the impermanence of thoughts and memories. If they were real, then they would remain; they don't remain because they are empty. So, the more we see this, we become softened. If I squeeze in my experience very hard, like squeezing the water out of something you've washed by hand, and you think, "Oh, now it's going to get dry quickly", but... drip, drip, drip... there was still water contained in the cloth. So we need to remove the last traces of the belief that there is something substantial there. That's where our freedom lies, and that of course is how we will help other people.

So, then he says: [Tibetan recitation]

Not maintaining the relaxed confidence of abiding in our original nature, we pay only lip-service to that view and throw cause and effect to the wind. Outwardly we appear disciplined with very good behaviour, yet within, our attachment, craving, desire and greed blaze like fire. Though we place our bodies in the solitude of the mountains, our minds ceaselessly stray to the town by day and by night. We don't trust our own experience and practice, yet we give advice to others like a child telling a story.

"Not maintaining the relaxed confidence of abiding in our original nature, we pay only lip service to that view and throw cause and effect to the wind." 'Original nature' means that which is there from the beginning. So, moment by moment your mind is full of something and emptying of that something. None of the contents of your mind are your original nature. What you take to be your personality is not your original nature. Your original, or basic, or underpinning nature is the mind which is empty of all content. Now, this is not something that you can see directly. It is the space within which appearances are arising and passing. So, we open, that means to let go; we have no agenda, we're just here. Something is arising... "Oh!" ... and it's vanishing. If there's an arising, there's a vanishing, it's not there as it was.

The more we have a relaxed confidence in this, we just see, "Oh, this is how the mind is!", then we can bring that view into every situation in the world. Then we see that, "Oh, because you are in an angry mood, there's no point in me talking about something which is a bit sensitive". That is to say, we have dependent arising. If I have some bad news to tell you, then I should try to find a moment when you will be able to hear it because you won't be preoccupied, and then you'll be able to stay with the difficulty until you become used to this change in your life. What arises in the mind is only part-formed; the formation arises in interaction with the context. So, in the traditional example: clear light comes into a small crystal and five coloured light comes out on the other side. This is the potential that was embedded in the clear light. But if

the crystal has many different chemicals in it and so on, and it's not so clear, this will limit the capacity to refract.

So, in the same way, if I am filled with my own habit formations, then it would be difficult for my potential to refract according to the outer situation, and it's more likely to be mediated by my own habit construction. So, only when we are completely open to our own empty ground – where we stop identifying with contents of the mind – we thereby become able to refract in a clean way.

“Outwardly we appear disciplined with very good behaviour, yet within, our attachment craving, desire and greed blaze like fire.” This is the tragedy of the fact that other people don't have x-ray eyes; they can't see into us, and this allows us to behave in a hypocritical way. We hide all our inner life and pretend to be nice and clear and sorted. So, if others can't see us clearly, this places a double obligation on us to see ourselves clearly and not lie to ourselves but accept our limitations and work directly to integrate them in emptiness.

Then he says, *“Though we place our bodies in the solitude of the mountains, our minds ceaselessly stray to the town by day and by night.”* So, if you've ever done a long retreat, you'll know that this is true. The longer you're in retreat, it's as if your memory becomes sharper and clearer about the good old times in the past. When situations like this arise, on an outer level, of course, we can make an intention to purify these limitations, but on an inner level we can try to see directly the actual nature of whatever is arising in our mind. The power that our thoughts have over us is the power that we give to them.

“We don't trust our own experience and practice,...” – and indeed, we shouldn't trust our own experience and practice, because it's not reliable – *“...yet we give advice to others like a child telling a story.”* If you are connected with a dharma group or organization, people will always ask questions, and there is a lot of ego-gratification in appearing to be the one who knows. But we have to again be very clear: am I deceiving myself and therefore deceiving others?

So, then he says: [Tibetan recitation]

It is impossible to be cheated by the compassion of the Three Jewels, yet due to our failing devotion we cheat and harm ourselves. Thus, although we are free of the wrong views arising from lack of faith in the guru and the holy dharma, due to these bad times we sentient beings perform bad actions and remain unsatisfied. Our understanding and clarity have gone under the power of carelessness. Not protecting our mindfulness we suffer great loss. We must now take the time to examine ourselves very carefully.

"It is impossible to be cheated by the compassion of the Three Jewels..." – that means, the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha won't cheat you; and the sangha here means this high Bodhisattva sangha, the ones who've reached at least the seventh stage of the ten stages; so they have the power to help – *"...yet due to our failing devotion we cheat and harm ourselves."* We become hesitant, doubtful. "I'm not sure if this practice is doing me any good. Maybe I should stop." So, then, when you're doing the practice, you're not fully at one with it, but instead you're fragmented. When this happens, we should recite the Seven Line Prayer again and again, and through increasing our devotion protect ourselves against doubt, confusion, boredom, laziness and so on.

So, then he's saying, *"Thus, although we are (might be) free of the wrong views arising from lack of faith in the guru and the holy dharma, due to living in these bad times we sentient beings perform bad actions and remain unsatisfied."* We're living in difficult situations. C.R. Lama's monastery was in a little valley; not many houses around, but he said, "If you go out to begging in the morning for two hours, you get enough food for a month." And think, in our lives, how much time we have to make waste going to work, settling in, taking work home with us, to journey home – a lot of time is taken up just to earn some money for food. So, in our culture we think, oh, we're making progress, we have central heating, we have artificial intelligence, we have so many developments on the horizon that will make our lives very easy, but according to the Buddhist tradition we are at the very end of time of the Buddha's teachings, and obstacles emerge everywhere like weeds in the garden. So, we have to factor into our practice that the kind of environmental support – that you might have had in a yogi's camp or a small village – is not available for us. Life maintenance eats up a lot of time. With electronic media... so many messages come in that you have to respond to in exactly the right way and so on...

So, if we're thinking about doing dharma practice, we have to be very clear how to ring-fence some time for this practice and not let anything intrude.

"Our understanding and clarity have gone under the power of carelessness. Not protecting our mindfulness we suffer great loss." If you are plugged into electronic media, you get message after message that some new event or interaction is very important, and so, instead of simply being mindful that there is turbulence in the world, you start to react to it with hopes and fears – and so we suffer the great loss of simple grounded-ness being our abiding mood through the course of the day.

So he says, *"We must now take the time to examine ourselves very carefully."* And if we're going to do that, it's vital that we look at the frame, and this is where the *Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind From Samsara* are very important: I'm going to die, but I don't know when. When I die, I'm not sure where I'll be reborn. I know some of the things that

I've done in this life, which I might regret, but I lack the clarity to be aware of the things that I've done in previous lives that can lead to very difficult rebirths. So, taking time to sit and examine, then you get a sense of what is going on. The traditional formulation is: "If you want to know about your past lives, look at your present body; and if you want to know about your future rebirth, look at your present activity."

Because you may want to go Dewachen, the pure land of Buddha Amitabha, but if you're easily distracted, and you don't recite the prayers for being reborn in Dewachen, the likelihood of making it there is probably quite small. As Karma Lingpa says at the end of his short Six Verses on the Bardos, "*If I don't follow the teachings of the dharma as it comes to me in our lineage, then I'll be my own betrayer.*" As it says in the basic Dhammapada text, "*Nobody can help you more than yourself; nobody can harm you more than yourself*" because apart from when you're asleep, you're with yourself all the time; nobody else has that capacity. So, you are the one who can truly observe what you're up to and find out what your blind spots are.

So then he says: [Tibetan recitation]

All that we have done has merely added to our confusion. All our thoughts are suffused with the afflictions and grasping. The virtue we do is always mixed with error, and though we see this we do nothing about it, so where else can our final destination be but the three lower realms? Then, when we look at all our actions and patterns of behaviour, we lose trust in ourselves, and when we consider others we are disappointed and critical, and then find no-one reliable to reassure and help us.

He says, "*All that we have done has merely added to our confusion.*" Now, you might think, "Hey, I don't want to have a thought like that, it sounds like despair", but it's almost as if he's giving himself a slap, say, "Wake up, don't go about your life in a dream!" You haven't acted with clarity. You've been excited by the possibility of something, but you haven't thought through the potential consequences or side effects.

So he says, "*All our thoughts are suffused with the afflictions and grasping.*" When we finish today, you can just sit for 10 minutes, sit in a park or in the garden or someplace, comfortable, and let your mind roll and just see what kind of stuff is arising, and you start to really see, "Oh, my mind is a mess!" Don't despair, "I'm just carrying out an audit. I'm just seeing how it is." There's always things to be done – either indirect, through applying some method, or directly, by opening to the basic openness of your unborn mind itself.

"The virtue we do is always mixed with error, and though we see this we do nothing about it, so where else can our final destination be but the three lower realms?" – that means: the hells, the hungry ghosts and the animals. Not every line that he's offering us here is going to hit the target for you as an individual, but sadly, I think it's undeniable that

we all get lost – especially in the accumulation of virtue, what was our motive? You want to try to act in a virtuous way, but underneath your guiding orientation is for someone to like you because you're a good person.

“Then, when we look at all our actions and patterns of behaviour, we lose trust in ourselves...” So, this is a very tricky point – you have to see how easily you get lost, but if this makes you very sad and unhappy and hopeless, then you're doing it too intensively. “Yes, I have many problems, but at least they are clearly defined now, so I can work my way through them!” So, we have to remain close to our belief in our capacity, our buddha nature, our ability to awaken.

Also, *“...when we consider others we are disappointed and critical, and then we find no-one reliable to reassure and help us.”* Nothing is perfect in samsara. People always have particular habits which are annoying. Some people are very upset because their partner is messy, other people are made unhappy because their partner is too obsessional and tidy. People are as they are. “I have a map. I have an idea of how other people should behave! People don't fit onto my map, but my map is right – this is what makes me unhappy!” The better map says, people will do what they do. “That's not much of a map!” So, I have to look at what other people do; I have to pay attention to the details of how they interact.

Some of the people we meet in life are quite invasive, or they're critical of us, or they give us advice we don't want. They are the way they are. What we can do though is to take ourselves out of the equation. They are not behaving in these ways to annoy us. They're quite happy there enjoying being the way they are. So, I am the one upsetting myself on the basis of my interpretation of their behaviour. Now, that is in the palm of my hand – that I can work on: my beliefs, my assumptions, my rigidity, my judgmental attitude.

And so he says, [Tibetan recitation]:

If we do not make things clear for ourselves now, then, when we are caught by the hands of Yama's messengers, which of us will not see our teachers' hopes destroyed? Then, when, we wait with all our hopes unfulfilled will we not feel cheated? Therefore, with guilt and remorse arising from recognising our own faults, in front of those who have the eye of wisdom, from the depths of our heart we confess all our dharma errors, faults, falls and lapses and vow never to repeat them. Please forgive us with your compassion. Please protect us from the terror of the chasms of the wrong path and sustain us so that we may keep on the pure path to liberation.

“If we do not make things clear for ourselves now, then, when we are caught by the hands of Yama's messengers...” – that means, at the time of death, not only are our various consciousnesses dissolving into each other in subtle manner, but we can also be caught in a very rough way by the messengers of the lord of death. For example, you may

have some idea of the practices you would like to do as you move towards death, but you might have sustained a terminal injury in an accident, in a car crash – there is shock, there is pain, there is confusion, and then in the midst of that Yama's messengers grab you. That's why, when we think about death, we think about the peaceful and wrathful deities. We wish for each other, "May you have a peaceful, easy death!" – clear and conscious to the end, but you might die in a shitty situation, in an operating theatre, full of anaesthesia – then you wouldn't have much clarity. That's why we also need to make friends with the wrathful deities, so that we can instantly mobilize the energy of our mind and increase our clarity in the face of difficult circumstances.

So, if we are caught by Yama's messengers, "*...which of us will not see our teachers' hopes destroyed?*" Your teacher believes in you. They do their best for you, they think about you, they have hopes that all will go well – that's from their side. But we can easily collapse our teachers' hopes if we don't make things clear for ourselves now – this is the time to develop clarity.

"Then, when we wait with all our hopes unfulfilled, will we not feel cheated?" It will be too late. The dharma you don't do today you will not do tomorrow because tomorrow you have tomorrow's dharma to do. We always do less than we would want to do. So, again we have to factor this into our practice, considering both, our outer behaviour and work to refine that, and our inner capacity to stay present with whatever is arising. That's what we want to settle in: calm on the outside, calm on the inside.

*"Therefore, with guilt and remorse arising from recognizing our own faults, for whatever errors in the dharma, whatever faults, falls and lapses we have made, determined never to repeat them again, before those who have the eye of original knowing, we make confession from the depths of our hearts. With your compassion please forgive us. Please protect us from the terror of the chasms of the wrong path and sustain us so that we may keep on the pure path to liberation."*¹ So, our mind has been pure from the very beginning. It is vajra, indestructible. Therefore whatever bad things you have done, whatever selfishness you've been wasting your time in, this can all be purified. Vajrasattva is the vajra being, this is us, he is our own purity shown to us. So, if we have faith in our own vajra nature, our indestructible nature, then using the four powers: the power of those who will observe us, of the audience, the power of those, before whom we make confession, and the power of remorse, the power of promising never to do it again, making a deep turn in your own nature, and the power of using the method of purification, the hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, then, with the blessing of all those who see our original

¹ The wording differs here in some places from that in the text but conveys essentially the same meaning; RJ

purity we will be forgiven and purified. But we still say, "Please, protect us from the terror of what can arise, sustain us, so that we can keep on the pure path to liberation."

Imagine how it would have been for the Tibetans when the Chinese arrived. Arriving by plane with trucks and so on, vehicles that hadn't been seen in Tibet; speaking sweet words and then gradually becoming more controlling and more violent; and then having to flee, trying to get to the north side of the Himalayas, so that you can find a way through, down into India, leaving everything you know behind, just carrying your little daily practice book and your bag of *tsampa* and a cloak. And you arrive in India; it's hot, you don't understand the language – and under these conditions so many of these Tibetan yogis maintained their practice. They didn't seek out trauma therapy, because they already had the best trauma therapy, which is to continue with the deep dharma practice they had. But that is the level of commitment that we need to develop in ourselves, so that, no matter what disturbances arise in this troubled world, we will not stray from the true path.

Break

We spend our lives busy, so busy, doing this and that, and yet we are empty-handed without even an atom of the essential truth. Now, abandoning the path of knowing many things yet experiencing only suffering, why should we not enter the path of knowing one thing and being free of all? Unfailing true benefactor, our sole hope and reliance, root guru who encompasses all the sites of refuge, when we pray to you with one-pointed devotion, please look on us with compassion, our supreme refuge, most kind lord!

"We spend our lives, busy, so busy, doing this and that, and yet we are empty-handed without an atom of the essential truth." All compounded things are impermanent. It's not possible to get lasting satisfaction from the things of this world. If you think of how you were as a child – it's gone... of your early adulthood – it's gone, vanished. Everything in of this life will vanish, and not only are we going to be empty-handed as everything vanishes, but we will not have even an atom of the essential truth.

"Now, abandoning the path of knowing many things yet experiencing only suffering, why should we not enter the path of knowing one thing and being free of all?" So, we know the path of knowing many things: going to school, studying different subjects, trying to work out how to get your mobile phone to work and so on. All these many, many things that we know do us very little lasting benefit. So, why should we not find the one thing and be free of everything? The one thing is the original ground, the basic ground of everything, the union of awareness and emptiness.

“Unfailing true benefactor, our sole hope and reliance, root guru who encompasses all the sites of refuge, when we pray to you with one-pointed devotion, please look on us with compassion, our supreme refuge, most kind lord!” So, this is pointing to the guru yoga. If the one thing that we really do need to know is the empty ground of our own being, then if we do the tantric form where we pray to Padmasambhava and receive the three-coloured lights and then merge our body of light in his, and then this merged ball of light gets smaller and smaller and smaller, our attention is completely at one with the ball of light, we’re not attending to anything else that may be there, and then it goes into a point of light and vanishes... then we sit in nothingness, in emptiness, nothing is happening, nothing is available, and yet somehow we are present. We’re not present as our ego self, we’re simply relaxed, open and present. In that opening you can directly see the empty ground of how you are.

Similarly, in a less elaborated way, we do the Guru Yoga of the white A; we open to the space in front of us with this image of A (ॐ), of emptiness, and then we release all our involvements, our attachments our identifications into the sound of A; and then we sit in open, empty presence. So, this is what he’s suggesting is the key thing to do. So, he’s saying, when we pray with one-pointed devotion, please come, be with us, so that your ever clear mind and our rather foggy mind can come together and your brilliance will cause the clouds of delusion to dissolve – and we will sit sky to sky.

And he says: [Tibetan recitation]

Please bless us so we see our own faults. Please bless us so we have no desire to examine the faults of others. Please bless us with the removal of all our disturbing bad thoughts. Please bless us so that good thoughts may arise from deep within. Please bless us so we have little desire and know our limits. Please bless us so we remember the time of death to be uncertain. Please bless us so we are free of worldly intentions when we die. Please bless us so true trust in the dharma is born in us.

So, praying with one-pointed devotion we say, *“Please bless us so that we see our own faults.”* That is so important!

Then, *“Please bless us so we have no desire to examine the faults of others.”* This is a great freedom, not having to judge, not having to formulate an opinion.

“Please bless us with the removal of all our disturbing bad thoughts.” So, these thoughts arise in the mind. We get disturbed because we go to the disturbance. Let it be! All thoughts arise and pass. The fact is, this thought itself removing. We have the blessing of the self-removal of the thoughts if we abide in open awareness.

“Please bless us so that good thoughts arise from deep within.” That is to say, I am the recipient of the good thoughts which arise from the depths of my *dharmakaya* mind.

“Please bless us so that we have little desire and know our limits.” There is so much stuff in the world, so many possessions we could have. Most of these possessions are methods of distraction. So, there is a huge power and freedom in being able to say “No!”

“Please bless us so we remember the time of death to be uncertain. Please bless us so we are free of worldly intentions when we die.” So, when we do the practice, especially if we start to do longer practices, where for one or two or more hours we are focused, stay on Padmasambhava, then we develop our capacity to maintain this sustained attention. And this is very helpful for when we die, so that we don’t go wandering off after transient thoughts when we need to stay focused.

“Please bless us so true trust in the dharma is born in us.” We have to cut our doubts on emptiness. So, you can observe the clouds: on some days, the clouds are quite thin and fluffy, and you see them rising, seemingly rising out of the sky and just dissolving back into the sky. In these appearances there is nothing to grasp. Seeing this, true trust in the dharma can be born.

[Tibetan recitation]:

Please bless us so we practise pure vision free of bias. Please bless us so we feel real genuine respect and devotion. Please bless us so we reduce our craving for what is unobtainable. Please bless us with the power to establish dharma in the depth of our mind. Please bless us with the power of diligence to practise within the depth of dharma. Please bless us so we liberate all our experience in the depth of practice. Please bless us so our practice is free of obstacles. Please bless us so the results of practice ripen quickly!

“Please bless us so we practice pure vision free of bias.” Pure vision means that what appears for us is not contaminated by a habitual conceptual interpretation. We stay with the purity of what arises through the senses. So, when you get a chance, you can sit outside and look at the tree, and try to catch how many interpretations you want to stick onto the tree. If you really see what your mind is doing, you would think, “I am so boring!” I came out to see the tree, but like a very boring person, they go to see their friend in the cafe and just talk for an hour and then go home – there was no space for the friend to speak. Let the tree speak, let the flowers speak, let the cat speak. If we don’t tell things what they are, we have a chance to experience the direct fresh revelation.

“Please bless us so that we feel real genuine respect and devotion.” Which means to become innocent, to become simple, not cooking things up in our mind but staying with a direct, open-hearted connection and from this love and devotion will arise.

“Please bless us so we reduce our craving for what is unobtainable.” That makes sense, clearly to accept: people die, people go away, people fall out of love with us... If it’s

not available, it's not available. Allow the craving to dissolve. Because the danger is that the manipulative tendency in our mind will try to make something happen, and try to make it happen, and this artificiality will so fill the space of our awareness that we will not see the purity of everything.

"Please bless us with the power to establish dharma in the depths of our mind." So, if you look for your mind with these five questions we should all be familiar with by now, we can't find our mind as something – it's not a thing. We're actually always moving in the depth of our mind. When you see that your mind is not a thing, the depth of it opens up, and we will find that the dharma teachings are there with us.

"Please bless us with the power of diligence to practice within the depths of dharma." That means, you don't just enjoy the openness of the mind and the freedom from the habitual impulse to get involved but maintain the diligence of doing the practice again and again and again – otherwise we have some special moments, but our clarity doesn't become stable.

"Please bless us so we liberate all our experience in the depth of practice." We have a thought, we think it's important, we don't want to lose it, we don't trust that if we allow the thought to vanish into its own ever open ground, then, as required, it can return.

"Please bless us so our practice is free of obstacles." An obstacle occurs when I'm trying to go from here to there. It's something which gets in the way of me progressing. But when we do our practice, we're not trying to get anywhere. We are here, the original nature of opening is here. So, I'm here; I need to open to here – no obstacle can arise, except the distraction of thinking that there's maybe something better, something in the past, something in the future. And this is exactly what Garab Dorje has warned us about. He says: open to your own mind; merge your mind with your mind; see your mind as it is. None of these sayings mean much in language, but if you sit a bit, you start to see what it means: to see your own mind – although it can't be seen. If you sit relaxed and open, everything is in that openness, and the obstacles which arise within it self-liberate without causing trouble.

"Please bless us so the results of practice ripen quickly!" It means, we have many potentials inside us, and the ripening of these potentials depends on the attention we give them. When you simply sit with an open, panoramic awareness, you're offering equal attention to everything, and this is the optimal situation for the ripening of your own potential.

Then he says: [Tibetan recitation]

Please bless us so we bring meaning and benefit to all with whom we are connected. Please bless us with the destruction of duality and its hopes and fears. Please bless us so we enter non-dual original knowing. Please bless us so we actualise the original knowing of our own essence. Please bless us so we abide in the secure place right where we are. Please bless us so we gain great confidence in non-effort.

“Please bless us so we bring meaning and benefit to all with whom we are connected” We’re not bringing some conceptual package that we’ve prepared before. We bring benefit to others by bringing ourselves open and available, without any agenda to sort them out. We don’t know what’s best for them. We are just here, with them. This is true benefit. And with that we bring meaning as well. The meaning is the immediacy of full contact. We’re not doing something to the other; the other is not doing something to us. So, in this silent spaciousness meaning and value arise spontaneously.

“Please bless us with the destruction of duality and its hopes and fears.” When duality is destroyed, there’s no big outer sign of this. I’m here, you’re here, but we’re not here as two separate entities. So, your shape, your way of breathing, posture, gesture and so on is here. So, in this state there is nothing to be done. It’s when my mind is moving and I’m thinking, “How are you? Do I like you? Do I not like you?”, my own thoughts, my own way of approaching you is objectifying you and separating you as someone for me to think about. So, duality dissolves when we simply stay open and available. The simple word for this is love, non-judgmental love for everything, for every moment; and when the reification and objectification of dualized thinking dissolves, there’s no basis for hopes and fears.

Our hopes and our fears arise because we have some map, or some game plan, or some intention, some idea of how it should be. But when we let go of our desire for control, it doesn’t mean that there is chaos, but it means rather we accept the unpredictability of how experience emerges. But, because we have been practicing being relaxed and open and responsive, we see that I am not the one who responds, but the underlying non-dual connectivity of subject and object is co-emergent. That is to say, every aspect arises all-at-once, *lhundrub*, and there is an inherent sweet connectivity in that. It’s not intrusive, it’s not trying to make the other in a particular way, nor is it abandoning. We are truly participating as part of the field. I’m not locked in a castle of my isolation. I’m available, and with that perception we also see that other people are potentially available, and we can nurture their availability with our availability.

“Please bless us so we enter a non-dual original knowing.” The original knowing is the knowing of the ground. Our consciousness is concerned with knowing something, particular things. I know what’s in my teacup, I know what time it is – this is consciousness, which always takes an object. But when you know the ground, the

ground is empty of any self, and it is also always full of unceasing or unstopped display of moments of potential. So, the original knowing is always inclusive. It's a welcome which allows the present moment to display itself fully.

"Please bless us so that we actualize the original knowing of our own essence." 'Rang ngo she par' means to know your own essence, or your own face, if you like, the truth of me. The truth of me is not that James is born in Scotland and that he's not very well at the moment – these comments speak to some transient pattern which will vanish. So, to see my own face is to see the original basis of everything – nothing to grasp, clarity shining forth.

Then he says, *"Please bless us so we abide in the secure place right where we are."* The secure place is here and now. If you are settled in here and now, nothing from the past can attack you. The past doesn't get to here and now, it's past. Moreover nothing in the future can get to you. "Oh, I'm worried about a big meeting I have tomorrow!" What is the cause of the worry? "My thought about the big meeting!" That thought about the big meeting is arising here and now, and as it arises... it vanishes – like a trout jumping in a pool... it's gone. So, what is there to worry about? This self-vanishing of all that occurs is the great protection, that is the safe place.

"Please bless us so that we gain great confidence in non-effort." Our ego-self tends to either be lazy or over-active, premature mobilization and so on. Non-effort means, we trust co-emergence. So, in the tantric system we see many images of yab-yum, of male and female deities in a sexual congress, joining. When two people like each other, it's not a big effort to kiss and get close. It's not that you have to make it happen, it just flows easily. So, in the same way, when subject and object are not being held apart by the imputation of separate individualizing essences, then we start to have the confidence that I will always be part of the field of emergence. I'm not in a little boat floating nowhere. I am participating in the open field within which, in this moment, everything else is participating. We are always already connected. I don't have to struggle to make connectivity because there is only one ground, one sole ground, which is the ground of all manifestation.

Then he says: [Tibetan recitation]

With the great indestructible weapon of original knowing which is always already present, may the entire diversity of samsara and nirvana be cut off in one instant. In the ceaseless great happiness of Nyema's celebration may we all find permanent security in the conduct free of all change. In the infinity which is the same everywhere there is not even the name of suffering – so who could one find there still looking for happiness? In this very life may we gain this kingdom of Samantabhadra, the self-liberating state free of grasping where happiness and sorrow taste the same.

“With the great indestructible weapon of original knowing which is always already present,...” – it’s a weapon because it protects us against the residual habit formations. So, it’s not like Brexit. With Brexit we say, “Go away, we don’t like you, Europe!” – and suddenly thousands of people are sitting in little rubber boats coming in in the middle of the night, and this great government can do nothing to stop it. So, it’s not like that. It’s not a defended position under attack. Original knowing is open – whatever arises, comes and passes through, whether it looks like a rainbow or a dark storm cloud. It arises... and it’s gone. The great weapon is emptiness, it is the great protection, it is the vajra, the indestructible nature. And it’s always here. When we read terms like *dharmadhatu*, the site of all the dharmas, of all phenomena, this simply means ‘here and now’, in this present space now; all there is, is this, which is arising – incredible diversity, changing moment by moment. And this openness, this original knowing is always already present.

He then says, *“...may the entire diversity of samsara and nirvana be cut off in one instant.”* This means, when diversity is contaminated with the notion of identity, of individual existence, then there are all these many, many different things. But in order to cut off all of these seeming things in one moment we see directly: nothing is there. This is the variety of the appearance of nothing. So, if you go to the sea on a stormy day, there is the wind and the tides, the waves are crisscrossing, and some are frothy... “Oh god, there’s so many kinds of waves!” And then you see, “Ah, each and every wave is the ocean.” There is diversity, and yet there is no individualization and separation. The great ocean is the ocean of emptiness, the waves of samsara and the waves of nirvana arise and change and shift and move, always patterning. So, when you see that this is not other than emptiness, you’re free. Everything is free in one moment.

“In the ceaseless great happiness of Nyema’s celebration...” Nyema is the consort or the partner of Dorje Sempa; her function is also purification; and she is always happy because her union is completely fulfilling, without lack or excess. And in the great happiness, which she enjoys, which is also not different from our nature, *“...may we all find permanent security in the conduct free of all change.”* So, that means that we have these three aspects: the mind is open and you can’t find it as something, and yet it’s inseparable from the clarity, which is always arising, and then we have our participation where we move within the field of clarity. That is to say, my conduct, my behaviour, my talking, my walking, my relating never changes. It only looks as if it changes, but there is nothing actually that changes. So, if you look in the mirror and you see, “Oh my reflection, my image is changing!”, actually nothing is changing because the reflection has no self-essence to go from one thing to the other; the nature of the reflection is permanent. Well, you can’t say it’s permanent, you can’t say its

impermanent, because anything you say about it cannot touch it, because it's unborn and empty.

This is the great security: our mind is both like the mirror and the reflection. You can't find the mirror because it's empty, it doesn't have any form or shape or personal image; and you can't catch the reflection because there's nothing to catch. This is the great security. Nothing can touch me because I'm not a thing holding myself apart from the world. So, if you tell me a joke and I laugh – before I wasn't laughing, now I'm laughing. Have I changed? Who is the one who has changed? Has James's fixed self changed? James doesn't have a fixed self. Looks like this, looks like that... So, James laughing is co-emergent with you telling the joke. Where is the true James? Doesn't exist. Nothing changes – always changing, never changing.

"In the infinity which is the same everywhere there is not even the name of suffering..." This is again meaning your own empty mind. So, it's like if you have a car: in your wing mirror, when you travel, many images arise, but the infinite potential of the mirror never changes. Now, you would be very, very happy if this also applied to your fuel tank. You go to the garage, you fill up the tank... after 200 kilometres, "Oh, it's still full!" Unfortunately this applies to emptiness, not to petrol. Your mind is empty and always filling, but there isn't a limited source of images inside your mind that will get emptied. The mind is always full, always empty, and this infinity, this unlimitedness is the same everywhere. And there is no one to be acted on, and no one to do the acting on, so there is no duality, and therefore not even the name of suffering.

"... – so who could who could one find there still looking for happiness?" In this infinite openness of your own unborn mind you are present, yet you don't exist; you are not a thing. Ceaselessly, all the time, experience... experience... experience... coming and going, coming and going, and it's always the same. There is no excess of suffering and no lack of happiness. Everything is equal in its unborn formation.

*"The self-liberating state free of grasping where happiness and sorrow tastes the same, in this very life may we gain this kingdom of Samantabhadra."*¹ So, when we see a picture of the Buddha Samantabhadra, he sits naked, he has no ornaments, no clothes, he is ever-fresh, naked awareness. So, how is he? How is his kingdom? What is his territory? How do we get into this? Well, what you have to do is to *"...enter the self-liberating state free of grasping, where happiness and sorrow tastes the same."* You can't catch thoughts – you're very worried about something, and without planning to you find that you've entered into a daydream... this sad thought wasn't your own, true, real thought; the distraction, the daydream wasn't a kind of substitute for your true feelings. Both were valid in the moment of their arising and then they self-liberate, they vanish. You can

¹ This is a different sequence but expresses the same as the text; RJ

keep grasping and grasping, but there's nothing to catch. So, in this state happiness and sorrow taste the same. They are self-dissolving experiences, emerging from emptiness, vanishing into emptiness, like the waves in the ocean. This is our own mind and this is the kingdom of Samantabhadra.

So, we come to the end of this prayer by Dudjom Rinpoche. It's been a good friend to me over the years. It illuminates many of the limitations which can arise in the mind, and if you pray in this way, if you give your heart to it, it can make you simple and genuine and naive and innocent like the image of Padmasambhava, age of eight, sitting on a lotus flower.

Okay, so let's end with a short Guru Yoga of the White A.

Now our time together comes to an end. I'd like to thank Pedro for his work in maintaining the Zoom today, so that we all have our connection, and our hard-working translators who ensure that people from different backgrounds can come into the centre of the mandala, and our heartfelt thanks to the Dudjom Rinpoche for his heartfelt connection with Guru Rinpoche which gave rise to this wonderful prayer; and also of course I want to thank C. R. Lama for all the teaching he gave me, which was very, very important.

On the 14th of June it will be the 21st anniversary of his death. I will think of you and I will think of Rinpoche, and I will be so glad that he gave me at least some little ability to connect you with the buddhadharma.

If you are north of the equator, I wish you a good summer and some relaxed time, and I hope we will be able to meet again. I enjoy and love our connection, so I wish you well...