

# *Dharma Quotations*

## *1. The Main Problem*

The three poisons are attachment, aggression, and ignorance. The chief of them is ignorance. The root of ignorance is the belief of an ego.

--- Thrangu Rinpoche *Commentary on the Chod Practice*

## *2. Conduct*

Many people study and practice the dharma diligently, but they do not arrive at any positive result. Many lamas are unhappy that they have not been able to engender realization in their pupils; the pupils are also unhappy, thinking, "I haven't been able to gain realization and experience hasn't come in my mind." The reason for this is that many lamas emphasize view and meditation but not conduct. The lamas hand this attitude on to their pupils, who also see view and meditation as important and conduct as not so important. There is the accumulation of wisdom and the accumulation of merit. The accumulation of wisdom is emphasized and given much attention while the accumulation of merit is regarded as insignificant. This is the reason why results are not achieved.

We should keep the practice of physical good actions and good speech in mind from day to day and from month to month and not forget them throughout our life. We should practice good actions of the body, use good speech, and use our possessions in order to accumulate good actions. We should avoid negative actions with our body and speech and through our possessions. If we keep that in mind all the time and put it into practice, then we will gather the accumulation of merit. If it is possible to gather the accumulation of merit in this way, then it will be impossible not to achieve beneficial results arising from the accumulation of merit when it comes to meditation practice and learning about the view.

We should remember good conduct at all times; whether we are meditating, working, or doing something else. When we are learning, contemplating, and meditating, we should always think of accumulating merit through our actions. We should never ignore the accumulation of good karma with our actions and speech and never regard it as unimportant. We should always try to avoid negative actions and remember the necessity of accumulating merit. This will make our practice fruitful.

--- Thrangu Rinpoche *Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong*

## *2. Conduct (Part 2)*

*The Mirror for Mindfulness* gives a further instruction about having one's body, speech, and mind being in accord with the Dharma. The writer says, "Even though you may have realized emptiness, you should never ignore or denigrate the importance of moral choice." This is especially important nowadays when people have access to all kinds of

instruction. There are Buddhist teachers going around who regularly give direct pointing out of the mind's nature. Because people receive these and achieve some degree of identification of this nature, they're apt to arrogantly feel that having realized this, they no longer need to worry about the results of action. We should never arrogantly ignore the results of our actions. We should never forget, that regardless of what we may have experienced or realized, wrongdoing is still going to cause us to suffer. No matter what virtue is still going to promote our happiness and because of this we should never denigrate even the smallest positive act. We should never think that virtuous action is too insignificant to be worthy of engaging in, or that an unvirtuous action is too insignificant to be worthy of stopping. In short, along with our cultivation of recognition of the true nature we need to continue to practice the ten virtuous actions and avoid the ten unvirtuous ones. We need to continue to practice all of the six perfections – generosity, enthusiasm, patience, and the rest and we must never think that we are above or beyond these things. The Buddha taught that it is essential to integrate one's view and one's conduct. As one's realization increases, one's conduct or behavior of body, speech, and mind must remain appropriate.

--- *Thrangu Rinpoche in The Interval between Life and Death*

Even if your view is higher than the sky, it is vital that your behavior regarding cause and effect be finer than barley flour.

-- *Gampopa*

### **3. Samsara**

Samsara is characterized by suffering and difficulties. For example, countries can have economic problems and its inhabitants then experience suffering because wealth has declined and poverty is high. Political difficulties can cause the pain of war and strife among groups. People think, "If we can be free of poverty, political intrigues, and strife among groups, then there will no longer be suffering." This is not true because it is the nature of samsara that problems and suffering are always present. There is a continuity of problems and difficulties occurring because that is the characteristic of samsaric existence. Therefore, we must free ourselves from samsara in order to be free from all suffering, difficulties, and problems. As long as there is no freedom from samsara, there will always be uncountable suffering, difficulties, and problems.

--- *Thrangu Rinpoche in Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong*

### **4. Dharma in Daily Life**

We shouldn't feel that Dharma occurs only when we sit down and meditate. Dharma should be present with us all the time. Dharma should be practiced in everything we do and at all times and used in all our actions. Of course, at the moment we can't act like Milarepa and the Buddha, but at least we can try to be responsible for our own mind. We must try our best not to let the negative mental states develop. We must try to feel more

compassion and to develop more bodhichitta. Although we can't do this immediately, at least we can do whatever we can by doing it everyday, again and again.

-- Thrangu Rinpoche in *The Middle-way Meditation*

### **5. How to Progress Along the Path**

I have met my teacher Milarepa who is a Buddha and I have received special instructions from the oral lineage. I have also received the instructions of the formless dakinis so I am very fortunate. Additionally, I practiced the contemplation of the view, meditation, and conduct.

My teacher Milarepa told me that the ultimate view is the view of the union of emptiness and wisdom, but he warned that I could develop the view purely on the intellectual level and thus be able to express this view only through words. This is the conceptual view, not the understanding of the true meaning.

What we need to do is to become certain of the meaning of the view by directly experiencing the mind itself thus liberating ourselves from the disturbing emotions. From that experience we gain complete conviction of the meaning of the view.

In meditation we need to have luminosity and the absence of fixation or clinging. In meditation we just rest in mental stability and peace of mind. But be warned that our meditation can get lost in this feeling of calmness. Mental stability by itself will not give us liberation, so we need to have luminosity for the five wisdoms to arise in meditation.

If our mind is dull or agitated, these five wisdoms will not be able to develop. So we have to remove dullness and agitation in our meditation. When we are meditating, we have to have mindfulness and awareness to free us from attachment and clinging.

There is the danger of falling into undisciplined behavior so our conduct should support the view of meditation. We therefore need to have mindfulness, awareness, and self-control at all times. Our conduct should be free of any attachment and this will result in stainless, unsurpassable conduct.

But be warned that we will attain signs and omens of achievement and recognizing these, we will feel so pleased and become attached to these signs thinking, "Now things are going very well." This attachment prevents the attainment of our goal, enlightenment. So to attain enlightenment we must overcome and eliminate the disturbing emotions.

-- A Doha of Rechungpa from *Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple*

### **6. How We Deal with Difficult Problems**

If we are having difficulties, there's actually no method to eliminate them directly. It's just a question of practicing the dharma and through that eventually there will be freedom from suffering. Most of these difficulties are experienced because of mind; so if we examine our own mind, we will see that we have a very strong hope or great expectation, and as a result of that, we have mental difficulties or suffering. So if we lessen that great attachment to how we expect things to be or turn out, then our mind will become more relaxed. Or we might have great anger or great desire and, as a result of that, we experience the pain or suffering. So if we lessen this, then our mind will become

more relaxed. Instead of looking externally for the answer to our problems, we look inwards and change the nature of the mind.

Sometimes there may be someone who is harming us, causing us problems, and even if we are good to them or help them, they just harm us in return. That can cause us to feel bad and causes us suffering, so we should think, “This is just what people do because they are ordinary beings. What ordinary beings do is try to fulfill their own wishes, and to do so they have to harm other people. That’s just the nature of ordinary beings, so that is how we would expect people to behave.” If we believe this is the nature of people and this is how they’re going to behave, then that will make us have a more relaxed thinking, “This is just the way they behave and it’s what we should expect.” Therefore we don’t feel any reason to be angry with them.

-- Thrangu Rinpoche

### ***7. Why We Meditate***

We might ask, “If we are concerned with the mind alone, why do we need to think about the view or the ground?” We need the view because we must understand why we meditate. We do not meditate just because it feels good or because we want to have great experiences or something like that. Nor do we meditate just because we want to feel peaceful and tranquil. We meditate because it is possible with meditation to utterly eliminate all our disturbing emotions from the mind. The purpose of meditation is to achieve complete elimination of the afflictions of mind. We meditate because our mind is innately capable of being utterly at peace, completely free of disturbing emotions, and perfectly insightful and discerning. So we meditate to clean our mind. We suffer from bewilderment but this confusion is temporary because it is secondary to the mind’s nature and not an intrinsic part of our mind. Therefore, if we clean the mind through the practice of meditation, this bewilderment can be removed. Since this bewilderment is not what the mind is fundamentally, when the bewilderment is removed, the mind does not disappear. Our experience does not stop and is not superseded by a state of annihilation or nothingness. The qualities of the Buddha include omniscient *wisdom of the nature of phenomena* and *wisdom of the variety of phenomena*. The seed of that wisdom is innate or intrinsic to our mind. We meditate in order to achieve that intrinsic wisdom.

-- Thrangu Rinpoche from *The King’s Doha of Saraha*

### ***8. The Nature of Mind***

If we don’t understand the actual nature of appearances, then we are going to continue in samsara. If we do realize the nature of appearances, then we know them to be the dharmakaya and there isn’t any need to look for any other philosophical view.

If we don’t know how to rest the mind in meditation, then we have to meditate on the mind.

The mind has three characteristics, which are luminous clarity, awareness, and emptiness. Luminous clarity means that there is an unbroken continuum of the mind. Awareness means we know exactly what it is that we are doing. Emptiness means the

mind has no true, solid reality. If we don't understand these three characteristics, then many different thoughts will arise.

However, if we are able to rest in a natural, uncontrived state then this is the sambhogakaya.

As for conduct, we should just deal with whatever occurs and be totally natural without any fixed plan or system. This is called naturally appearing and naturally liberating conduct.

-- A Doha of Rechungpa from *Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple*

### ***9. Distinguishing Dharma from Dharmata***

Ordinary persons who do not understand dharmata, or the way that all phenomena actually exists, simply become involved with that which is incorrect, that which leads to confusion, and this causes false appearances to arise.

Our mind has the nature of emptiness. Nevertheless, it is, at the same time, very clear, extremely luminous, and unceasing. Because of this luminous clarity, various thoughts arise and we become involved in the confusion. It is like a painting. Generally, we do not mistake a painting for the object portrayed in the painting. However, if the painting is extremely good our eyes can be deceived and gradually we become more and more accustomed and involved in it and the painting is taken as being real. In the same way, the very vivid clarity of our mind leads us to confuse appearances with something that is real and we become involved in this confusion.

Our mind being empty is homogenous, without differentiation. However, mind as luminous clarity has differences, namely, the eight consciousnesses. The foundation of these eight consciousnesses is the eighth alaya consciousness. In the words of the root text (*Differentiating Dharma and Dharmata*) the alaya consciousness is referred to "the store house of seeds." This refers to the fact that the various predispositions or latencies (Tib. *bak chag*) have entered the alaya consciousness and later they will return as various appearances. If these predispositions that have entered the alaya consciousness are good, the appearances accordingly will be something good. If, on the other hand, these predispositions are of a bad nature, then the appearances from which they arise will be ugly and painful in nature. So the root of all appearances is the alaya a consciousness.

This confusion begins when the six consciousnesses make contact with the six types of sensory experiences—sight, sound, smell, etc. This contact of the external object and the internal consciousness causes appearances to arise. Even though phenomena are empty, the six consciousnesses arise from the alaya consciousness, which in turn give rise to appearances.

When these appearances are mistaken as being real i.e., not empty which is their true nature, the confusion of samsara arises. However, if the true nature of these appearances is realized to be empty, i. e., as the dharmata, these mistaken appearances are abandoned and the bodhisattva develops non-conceptual wisdom.

--Thrangu Rinpoche in *Distinguishing Dharma and Dharmata*

## ***10. Harsh Speech***

When a simpleton abused him, Buddha listened to him in silence, but when the man had finished, asked him, "Son, if a man declined to accept a present offered to him, to whom would it belong?" The man answered, "To him who offered it."

"My son," Buddha said, "I decline to accept your abuse. Keep it for yourself."

-- The Buddha as told by Will Durant

## ***11. Looking at Mind***

As it is, we have never really looked at our own mind. From beginningless time we have not looked to see what our mind really is. We have just gone along casually, being confused about it, thinking, "Well, I have a mind. It does exist. It has this and that quality and it is very extremely potent." However, when we examine, "Where is my mind? What is my mind," we don't see much of anything. If we look, there isn't a whole lot to be seen.

Similarly, if we look intensively at mind, we don't see anything. Why don't we find anything? Is it because we do not know how to look? Is it because we do not know where to look? Is it because our mind is transparent like water so we can't see it? Is it because our mind is too small to see? No, when we look, we simply don't find anything. The reason why we don't find anything is that our mind doesn't really exist. It is, in fact, just the nature of dharmata. This is discovered not through reasoning and analysis; but by directly looking at mind.

As we talked about before, we examine external phenomena by looking at the hand for instance, and asking, "Where is this hand? Is the thumb the hand? Are the fingers the hand?" After extensive analysis when we then think, "Yes, emptiness is probably the truth of the matter." But, we don't have to do this intense analysis when we look at our mind. We just look for our mind, "Where is it?" In that way, we see emptiness directly. Does that mean that we don't find anything because mind doesn't really exist, does that mean that we are just a lifeless corpse? No, even though we don't find anything when we look for our mind, nevertheless we know that there is what is called "luminosity." Or "luminous clarity." If we then look for that luminous clarity, we don't find anything. We discover while the mind is luminous and clear, it is also empty and when it is empty, it is luminous and clear.

So we experience through meditation what can be discovered through reasoned analysis and arrive at the same thing. These topics are explained in the treatises and are the experience at which we arrive at through the practice of Mahamudra. Bringing the practice to this one point, come down to one thing.

-- Thrangu Rinpoche in *Distinguishing Dharma from Dharmata*

## ***12. The Correct View***

If the view you take of things is basically correct, then it will be a strong cause of your liberation, and by causing your liberation, it will be an indirect cause of the liberation of others. In short, a correct view of phenomena produces all manner of happiness.

On the other hand, if your view is sufficiently incorrect and actually becomes a perverted or misguided use of your intelligence, then it will obstruct your path to liberation, thereby preventing you from liberating others and becoming an obstacle to happiness.

Thrangun Rinpoche – *Medicine Buddha Sutra*

## ***13. On Attachment***

Milarepa replied, “I am Milarepa, the yogi from Tibet. There is a great purpose to not having possessions.” He then explained this in a spiritual song:

“I have no desire for wealth or possessions, and so I have nothing. I do not experience the initial suffering of having to accumulate possessions, the intermediate suffering of having to guard and keep up possessions, nor the final suffering of losing the possessions. This is a wonderful thing.

“I have no desire for friends or relations. I do not experience the initial suffering of forming an attachment, the intermediate suffering of having disagreements with friends and family, nor the final suffering of parting with them. Therefore it is good to be without friends and relations.

“I have no desire for pleasant conversation. I do not experience the initial suffering of beginning conversation, the intermediate suffering of wondering whether to continue the conversation, nor the final suffering of the conversation deteriorating. Therefore I do not delight in pleasant conversation.

“I have no desire for a home land and have no fixed residence. I do not experience the initial suffering of partiality of thinking that ‘this is my land and that place isn’t’ I do not experience the intermediate suffering of yearning for my land. And I do not experience the final suffering of having to protect my land. Therefore I do not have a fixed abode.”

-- Milarepa from *Ten Teachings from the Songs of Milarepa*

## ***14. On Giving***

All the joy the world contains  
Has come through wishing happiness for others  
All the misery the world contains  
Has come from wishing pleasure for oneself.

--Shantideva *A Guide to a Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*

### ***15. Why We Practice the Dharma***

10. All the water and drink you've consumed  
From beginningless time until now  
Has failed to satisfy your thirst or bring you contentment.  
Drink therefore of this stream  
Of enlightened mind, Fortunate Ones.  
-- Milarepa

### ***16. The Greatest Miracle***

The real miracle is not that we walk either on water or on thin air,  
But that we walk on earth.  
--Thick Nhat Hanh

### ***17. It is not enough***

Contemplating death and impermanence is not enough,  
because one needs also to practice the dharma.  
Avoiding the ten negative actions and realizing the faults of samsara is not enough.  
because one has to follow the very finest details of karma's actions and results.  
Meeting a great teacher and receiving instructions is not enough  
because one has to practice the teachings until one has gained realization and  
experience.  
Gaining stability of mind in meditation is enough.  
because one needs to attain something more difficult --the nature of mind.  
  
-- A spiritual song from *Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple*

### ***18. The Meaning of Life***

This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds.  
To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at  
the movements of a dance. A lifetime is like a flash of  
lightning in the sky, rushing by, like a torrent down a  
steep mountain.  
--The Buddha, *quoted by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*

### ***19. The Root of Mahamudra Practice***

The root of Mahamudra practice is the maintenance of mindfulness and alertness in your  
mind, which needs to be cultivated, both in formal meditation practice and in post-  
meditation. The post-meditation discipline of maintaining mindfulness and alertness in  
the midst of one's activities, such as walking, sitting, talking, eating, and so on, is rather

difficult for beginners. But if you keep on practicing this discipline without becoming discouraged, it becomes not too difficult, and you can actually accomplish liberation of your mind, which is why Mahamudra is called the path of liberation, which is simple or free of elaboration.

--Thrangu Rinpoche *Pointing out the Dharmakaya*

## **20. Engaging in Dharma**

We shouldn't feel that Dharma occurs only when we sit down and meditate. Dharma should be present with us all the time. Dharma should be practiced in everything we do and at all times and used in all our actions. Of course, at the moment we can't act like Milarepa and the Buddha, but at least we can try to be responsible for our own mind. We must try our best not to let the negative mental states develop. We must try to feel more compassion, to develop more bodhichitta. Although we can't do this immediately, at least we can do whatever we can by doing it everyday, again and again.

--Thrangu Rinpoche *The Middle-way Meditation*

## **21. The Texts of the Karma Kagyu**

Some people feel that they just want to meditate and that there isn't much point in doing a lot of studying and learning. There are others who feel that learning and studying is important, and don't feel interested in just practicing. There are many different dispositions among people and so the Buddha presented his teachings in many different ways. However, to practice we need to know the actual methods of practice, the way that we should practice, and the result that comes from practicing. This makes it necessary to study texts. But studying by itself is not enough; we need also to join study with the actual practice of meditation. If we only study when the time comes that we really need the benefit from our study, we won't gain benefit. So we have to practice as well as study.

There are many Tibetan Buddhist books on the Vajrayana. There are books written with the idea of pleasing the reader, by putting things as pleasantly as possible, to sell a lot of books, and make a lot of money. Rangjung Dorje, however, composed his text entirely with the intention of benefiting the practitioner, so his text is very different from the books that are very pleasant to read.

There are so many books on Buddhism and the kind of books we need are those giving the teachings which have been preserved correctly and purely and haven't become mixed with worldly concerns or politics, and so on. In Tibet, the teachings have been preserved correctly and purely, and this is due to the kindness of the Himalayan Mountains allowing the Tibetans to practice the dharma in isolation without outside influences. Other Buddhist teachings have lost their continuity and come to an end, but the Tibetan teachings are still being transmitted continuously.

However, in 1959, with the Chinese invasion of Tibet, it seemed as if this transmission of the Tibetan teachings would come to an end. When I arrived in India from Tibet, I didn't have a single page of a book with me and I thought, "I'm going to forget my Tibetan." There were no Tibetan books to be read anywhere. So I was really

afraid of forgetting my Tibetan and that the transmission of these teachings could come to an end. But then some Tibetan lamas, with a lot of hard work, went seeking out copies of texts, finding them, publishing them, and teaching the meaning of these texts. And with help from western countries, the Tibetans were able to study and practice these teachings so that, although the transmission of some teachings may have ceased, the transmission of most of the teachings has been preserved. Some will give the empowerments and others will be receiving empowerments, and people will be studying texts, understanding them, and in that way, most of the teachings have been preserved.

In Tibet, the Karma Kagyu was a smaller sect and not that well established because they didn't have any state support. The Gelugpa school had plenty of state support and so they printed many, many texts, and had monasteries with thousands of monks and many great scholars. The Karma Kagyu in Tibet had only small monasteries scattered all over, with maybe one or two lamas with some realization or experience here and there. But even though the Karma Kagyu were not that well established in Tibet, due to the hard work of the Karmapa and of Kalu Rinpoche, the Karma Kagyu lineage has prospered. They worked very hard to preserve the transmission of the teachings and the practice of the Karma Kagyu so that the transmission of the teachings would not die out.

The reason why the Karma Kagyu has prospered more than the other traditions is that, for example, the Gelugpa sect is headed by a very special lama, the Dalai Lama, but he also has to be concerned with politics. Therefore he's not able to devote himself completely to the religious side of things. The Sakya and Nyingma traditions had married lamas who had sons and daughters, sisters and brothers, nephews and nieces and so on to be concerned about and to look after. In the Kagyu tradition, there are the Karmapa and Kalu Rinpoche who had nothing to worry or think about except food and clothing, so they could be entirely devoted to dharma activities. Their thoughts would be, "Can I make a retreat center here? What about making a college here by getting these monks to meditate, by getting these texts taught, by getting these empowerments given, and so on." They would be thinking purely in terms of the transmission of the teachings and their preservation and so everything would be seen in terms of the transmission of the dharma such as the Six Yogas of Naropa, the Six Yogas of Niguma, the teachings on the Mahamudra, and so on. So everything has gone very well.

The Karmapa published and printed the Kangyur, the Tibetan collection of the Buddha's teaching, and the Tengyur, the collection of the Indian commentaries on the Buddha's teachings. He established a monastery and temple (at Rumtek in Sikkim) and told monks, "If you don't have anything to eat, then come and live here, you'll have something to eat and you'll be able to practice and study here." Kalu Rinpoche also established a retreat center, and said to monks, "Come to my retreat center. If you don't know how to recite the texts, I'll teach you how to recite the texts. If you don't know how to meditate, I'll teach you that. If you don't have the empowerments, I'll give them to you. If you don't have any food, I'll provide the food. Just come along and be in my retreat center."

Therefore in the Karma Kagyu tradition, the full transmission of all the teachings and the practice have been preserved and have been transmitted. In general, the teachings from Milarepa and Marpa and Gampopa have all been passed down, and in particular, with the changing of the times after 1959, none of these teachings has gone to waste, and they have all been preserved. So there's the whole complete range of the teachings and

practice, and we don't have to worry, "If I'm going to practice or receive teachings, are these teachings good enough to receive or should I get my practice from some place else?" There's no need to worry about that because there's perfect transmission of all of these teachings and instructions for us to be able to practice and learn.

-- Thrangu Rinpoche *The Third Karmapa's Treatise on Buddha-essence*

## **22. Tantric Practice**

It is important to understand that there are slight differences between the sutras and tantras. Once somebody told me, "When you hear the Buddhist teachings, you hear the teachings on emptiness, Shamatha meditation, love, compassion and so on. This is very good, but when you see Buddhists practicing, it is not the same. In monasteries drums are beaten, horns are blown and there are strange deities, some looking peaceful and others looking wrathful. You don't actually see Buddhists practice what they are teaching." It is true. This is how it appears to a newcomer. But, it is important to learn and understand the differences between the sutras and tantras exactly for this reason.

In the practice of the dharma, the goal is to realize the true nature of phenomena and to attain a high state of wisdom. The actual practice to achieve this in the Tibetan tradition is through the practice of the tantras. There are two methods in the tantras: one is the path of liberation and the path of methods. In the path of liberation one looks directly at the mind, at its true nature, which slowly becomes more and more clear. In the path of methods, various methods and yogic practices are used to assist one to increase the clarity and stability of the mind so one can look into the nature of mind more easily.

So, to do this one meditates on the deities and on the nature of these deities. What one wishes to realize in this deity practice is the dharmadhatu, the emptiness of phenomena inseparable from wisdom and luminous clarity. This is the ultimate wisdom of Buddhahood that Buddha-nature is present within all beings. This is the nature of the yidam deities that are meditated on, who are not perceived as external, existent beings. They are seen as internal to oneself because these deities that one is meditating on are actually one's own nature. These deities include Chakrasamvara, Hevajra, *Vajravarahi* and so on. In tantra practices one meditates on this pure nature. One's own mind is that of the deity in meditation. In these practices one imagines one's own body to be that of the deity so that one does not have an ordinary and impure body, but rather one possesses the stainless body of the deity during the meditation.

One meditates on the pure body, speech, and mind of the deity because the goal in dharma practice, as described before, is to eliminate the obscurations of the disturbing emotions and the obscuration to knowledge. One wishes to get rid of these impurities and by meditating on one's nature as being the pure nature of the deity (the pure body, speech and mind), the impurities will naturally go away. If one simply strives to directly eliminate the disturbing emotions and the obscuration of knowledge, they will not vanish. By meditating on the pure form, the impurities will naturally be eliminated. Not only that, but when imagining oneself in this pure form, one radiates light rays from one's heart, which invite the yidam deities to come and merge into oneself. One experiences cessation in the mind when one does this. This practice creates a tendency in the mind towards purity and, to some extent, this is what dispels the impurity of one's perceptions.

Also, during tantric practice there are all kinds of different perceptions of many things, pleasant or unpleasant sounds, drums, gongs, unusual smells of incense and so on. These are all appearances which actually aid one in meditation. To engage the body, speech, and mind in the practice there is also the recitation of the mantra, which isn't normal speech with some meaning. Rather it is a sound. The Sanskrit meaning of a mantra can be translated, but the masters recommend not to translate the mantras but to leave them in Sanskrit. These mantras are not ordinary conversation but rather are unusual sounds that inspire us and therefore they are a support our willingness to practice.

--Thrangu Rinpoche *Two Views of Emptiness: Shentong and Rangtong*

#### **24. What is Mahamudra?**

What is Mahamudra. It passes beyond mind of ordinary people, it is luminous, it is without conceptuality, and it is like space.

-- Maitripa from *Essentials of Mahamudra* by Thrangu Rinpoche

#### **25. Compassion**

The mighty tree of emptiness that lacks compassion bears no fruit.

-- Thrangu Rinpoche in *Citizen's Song of Saraha*

#### **26. Samsara**

Whoever understands the inseparability of Samsara and Nirvana will be completely liberated.

- -- Thrangu Rinpoche in *Citizen's Song of Saraha*

#### **27. On Rainbow Body**

Someone achieves a rainbow body (Tib. *ja lu*) when they have completely realized the nature of their mind. When we first directly see the nature of our mind, this is what in the sutra path is called the path of seeing, and it is authentic realization. But the *path of seeing* is not complete because there remains the *path of meditation* to be accomplished. The path of seeing is the mere recognition of mind's nature, but it is not enough to cause the rainbow body phenomenon. The path of meditation is marked by the final elimination of any distinction between meditation and postmeditation until the level of Buddhahood. When we are in *even placement meditation* (Tib. *mnyam bz'ag*) the appearances of post-meditation (Tib. *rjes thob*) are undiminished, and when we are in post-meditation, the state of even placement is undiminished. When we achieve that final level of realization, all appearances, while remaining distinct, are experienced as insubstantial, like, a rainbow. At that point, there is no longer any difference between the experience of the nature of the person's mind and the nature of external phenomena. The removal of any

kind of such border between mind and external appearances means that when the person dies, they have the choice of allowing or not allowing their body to naturally dissolve into emptiness. The parts of the body that won't dissolve are the parts of the body that are not pervaded by the nervous system which are mainly the hair, and the nails.

The fact that someone does *not* demonstrate the Rainbow Body at death does not necessarily mean that they *can't*; some who have achieved that level elect to leave physical remains behind for the purpose of the faith of others—relics, and so on as, for example, did the Buddha.

--Thrangu Rinpoche from *Direct Instructions of Karma Chagme*

### **28. On Vajra Commitments (Samaya)**

There is another issue connected with empowerments that is of great concern to many people, which is samaya. Many people wonder whether it is good to receive empowerments at all, because each empowerment seems to come with commitments (Tib. *samaya*); and are these not a source of great danger to those who are unable to keep them? The presentation of the commitments connected with empowerments as very, very strict and presented as very dangerous for a reason. It is presented that way in order to encourage practitioners to engage in virtue. To understand why this is done, you must remember, the primary responsibility of a guru is to, one way or another, get you to do the right thing. In order to do that, they will sometimes say, “Having received this empowerment you are bound by such and such samaya, and should you transgress it you will be in great peril.” Presenting it this way is done in order to get you to do the right thing. But you should not think that having received empowerments places you in peril. Rather receiving empowerments is always a source of benefit.

Now, if someone receiving an empowerment were to utterly repudiate the entire thing and generate intense antipathy for the whole process and tradition, that is to consciously engage in a complete reversal of virtue and wrong-doing and do everything they could wrong, well obviously, under those circumstances, that person might fall to a lower rebirth. But you are not going to fall to a lower rebirth simply because you receive an empowerment and thereafter can't fulfill all your commitments.

To understand this, it may help to consider the word for “commitment” which in Sanskrit was translated as “samaya” and was translated into Tibetan as *dam tshig*, which means, “words of promise” or “words of bond.” Now, the idea of “words of promise” is not that if you transgress against these rules or regulations, you will fall fast into vajra hell after your death. Rather the point is that having received empowerment and instruction, you should practice it. If you don't actually practice, simply receiving empowerment is insufficient. As we have seen, one of the things that keeps practice going is the momentum of commitment. So, if you make a commitment when you receive empowerment to practice, the momentum of that commitment will enable you to carry it through. In other words, the commitment or promise that you make during the empowerment is actually a source of great help or assistance to you. Having received the empowerment and then not doing the practice is not going to cause you to fall to lower states; it's simply that the promise didn't really fulfill its function, because it didn't produce the momentum of commitment and, therefore, practice. So samaya should be

regarded more as a useful tool than a threat. The purpose of it is to give you the means to establish a momentum of diligent practice, and this is established because you approach the empowerment with that attitude of enthusiastic commitment. If you ask, "Well do I need to keep samaya?" You do need to keep samaya, because you need to keep your promises. But you should not keep them out of fear.

--- Thrangu Rinpoche *The Interval between Life and Death*

### ***29. On Mindfulness***

The thought manifests as the word;  
The word manifests as the deed.  
The deed develops into habit.  
and habit hardens into character.

So watch the thought and its ways with care.  
Let it spring from love born out of concern for all beings.

--The Buddha

### ***30. Buddhism***

Buddhism has the characteristics of what would be expected in a cosmic religion for the future: It transcends a personal God, avoids dogmas and theology; it covers both the natural and the spiritual; and it is based on a religious sense aspiring from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity.

-- Albert Einstein *quoted from Tricycle*

### ***31. On Compassion and Emptiness***

Compassion is the road to enlightenment. The more compassion we have, the further along the road to enlightenment we are.

The measure of realizing emptiness is the degree to which we have attachment to our self.

-- Adzom Paylo Rinpoche, Crestone, Colorado 2004