

NYINGMA SUMMER SEMINAR, 2002

“Everybody has some notion of truth and thinks what they are doing is something wonderful and correct, but from the point of view of someone watching from a distance, it is all just craziness.”

- Talk 6: July 22, 2002

THE TEN MAGNIFICENT CONSCIOUSNESSES

I would like to request the participants here to generate bodhicitta before we begin this session of teachings, and listen to the teachings with the proper motivation and proper conduct, as taught in the sutras and tantras.

During the Nyingma Summer Seminar, we focus on the teachings of the Three Yanas, with topics from the Basic Vehicle, or Hinayana; the Great Vehicle, or Mahayana; and the Diamond Vehicle, or Vajrayana. We are in the Hinayana section now and have completed teachings on renunciation and on the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Please keep in mind that when we maintain a clear understanding of the qualities of the Three Jewels, then taking refuge will be much more significant.

We also spoke about taking precepts, which refers to the principle of *shila*, discipline. We take precepts in terms of our three doors—body, speech, and mind—through which we have accumulated all of our past karma and created all of our samsara. By taking precepts and transforming these three doors—working very genuinely, from the depth of our heart, on the path of individual liberation—we will accomplish the essential meaning of the Hinayana teachings, and of *all* the Buddha’s teachings as well.

Unless we transform these three doors, with *shila* as the ground, we cannot progress on our spiritual journey, or even make lofty promises to ourselves to reach our destination. By paying attention to the state of our three doors, we establish a definite basis for feeling confident in our progress, so that we can make more constructive attempts to attain individual liberation and enlightenment.

It is my hope that people will genuinely try to apply this to their everyday lives. You can do this any time, whenever you have an awareness or thought about the practice, because you are always doing something, either physically, verbally, or mentally. As soon as the thought or intention to practice comes, it is easy to self-reflect, and recognize where your three doors are. Then try to apply the teachings instantly.

The teachings on discipline are very simple, but very profound. Discipline is not cultivated out of a dualistic notion of good and bad. It has nothing to do with religion, or developing prejudice toward particular actions. Discipline is more about developing awareness and mindfulness to see how the ten negative actions bring so much suffering into our lives.

When their well-being is threatened by fire, water, or dangerous animals, sensible, intelligent people will protect themselves by pulling back. In the same way, we should pull

back from endangering ourselves with the ten negative actions, which have harmed us for so many eons, and continue to affect us in this life. We must observe this policy openly and without judgment. Again, this is not about being “good” or “bad,” or confirming “me” in one direction or the other. It is about liberation from the dangers of the five negative emotions, and the power of ignorant mind.

These immense dangers have developed over time because of our habitual tendencies. If we don't do anything about them right now, the consequences of all our wrongdoing—in this and future lives—will be unimaginable. We must really be vigilant in our restraint and try to develop a full sense of the precepts of the Three Jewels, practicing by taking them over and over again. It is also important not to become discouraged, thinking we can't succeed, because if we keep at it, we will. In the beginning, when we fail, we must keep an open mind, developing more awareness and mindfulness as we bring intelligence about *how* we have failed into our life. Then, because of the blessings of the Three Jewels, the blessings of the lineage, the blessings of our own good intentions, and the power of our *tathagatagarbha*, we will notice change, from month to month, and certainly from year to year. As this change happens on the inside, outside change will happen as well. Despite our living in samsara, if we relate to the shila principle, life will become much more workable and obstacles easier to overcome.

So during this session, I would like to give a teaching from the sutras about developing the “Ten Magnificent Consciousnesses” that bring immense benefit in this life, and particularly benefit our mind in the time before death. These ten magnificent consciousnesses, or awarenesses, are as follows.

- The first is developing non-attachment to pleasures and the objects of pleasure in this life.
- Second, cultivating compassion and kindness toward all mother sentient beings.
- Third, cleansing all our past grudges from deep inside our heart; letting them go and developing patience instead.
- Fourth, confessing honestly and deeply all our wrongdoing, and all violations of precepts. Along with this, arousing a stronger determination to take the precepts purely and work on maintaining them continuously.
- Fifth, developing renunciation and remorse toward all the negativities that we and others have ever accumulated, without getting caught in judgmental mind.
- Sixth, determining our actions by intelligence and not by emotions.
- Seventh, developing fearlessness in this life and toward the next life.
- Eighth, the realization of impermanence dawning in the depths of our heart.
- Ninth, realizing that nothing exists intrinsically; realizing that outwardly or inwardly, everything is egolessness.
- Tenth, realizing the truth itself, and therefore appreciating nirvana.

We must train ourselves in these ten consciousnesses, reflecting over and over on these points.

Developing Non-Attachment

Let's talk about the first point, developing non-attachment to pleasures and all the objects of pleasure of this world. Our mind has two aspects: wisdom and ignorance. Wisdom mind is the aspect that guides us and bring us to liberation. Ignorant mind binds us to suffering and

samsara. Right now, the former is weak, the latter strong. As we gradually increase our wisdom and intelligence, the weak aspect will gain strength and power. But because ignorant mind is so strong, we should not get discouraged if we cannot immediately develop non-attachment to the pleasures of the senses, or even don't want to develop non-attachment. The temptations of the ignorant mind are so strong that sometimes we resist.

If we examine our attachments to the objects of pleasure, it seems at first glance that they have significant meaning for us, but in reality they aren't even that pleasurable. Yet they grab the core of our heart, squeezing us, making us totally vulnerable and weak, without any clarity or strength of mind. They leave us with no sense of space, no freedom to move around, or feel free of distraction and worry. We need to reflect on this, deeply and openly, and then ask ourselves, "Am I going to live with this attachment and bring it with me to my grave, or can I do something right now to diminish it?" Though the attachment may be to our spouse, children, home, or valued possessions, at some point we will have to let it go, because life forces us to let go. Before the situation arrives when we *have* to let go, we can let go in advance by just working on our mind. There will be a great benefit because our mind, which is now so bound by our attachments, will be lifted up and freed. By doing this, so much space, flexibility, clarity, and enjoyment will come into our life.

We know very clearly when we are attached. Things that we are attached to do not provide the joy or happiness we expect from them. Instead of being good company, they become headaches. They begin to weigh us down. Even to simply enjoy what we have, we need to let go and develop a sense of detachment.

What do we mean by "detachment"? First we have to notice what our attachment is. Then, decreasing it is detachment. There is no detachment to be cultivated separately from tapping into our attachment first, and then decreasing it. So it is important to discover first how to tap into our attachments, and then how to decrease them, and also understand the causes of the attachments.

As you gain freedom and flexibility by noticing your attachments—as you gain a greater sense of awareness of what's happening to your mind—you gain strength inside, along with a better perspective of how to relate to your situation or the objects of your attachment. Then detachment will naturally occur. But before this happens, it's all just worry and stress. Everything consumes your heart, draining all its energy, its juice. Therefore, it is very important to develop non-attachment toward the things that we are so attached to.

We should not remain in denial about our attachments, but instead become aware of what we are attached to, and try to diminish them at their source, which is in the heart itself. When attachments are strong in our mind, the heart is heavy and burdened. From this point of view, attachments are actually a health concern; one cannot live long with such a heavily burdened heart. According to Buddhist medicine, attachment, aggression, and ignorance are the sources of all disease. Blood pressure problems, heart conditions, sleeping problems—all of these conditions have to do with attachments that overwhelm the heart and stir up the nervous system. Therefore, the heart has to be cleansed and lightened. If we tap into our attachments, it will do so much good for our physical health and our life in general. It will also increase our longevity.

We should cultivate detachment, and develop the courage to face our own mind. If we can't face it right now, then tomorrow we can try to face it more fully than we did today. And if not this month, then next month; if not this year, next year. By focusing in this way, we will eventually be able to face our mind.

Sometimes we can't even think about certain things because so many issues and emotions surround them. There are so many attachments to the self, and ideas that disturb our mind. But when we revisit them repeatedly, they become less of a problem. Gradually we can become able to clearly see and accept our heart and mind, and then cleanse them. First we must find the courage to practice in this way. So we must always work on cultivating the first magnificent consciousness, developing non-attachment to all objects of pleasure, anything that grabs us strongly in the core of our heart.

Cultivating Kindness and Compassion

Secondly, we have to develop kindness and compassion toward sentient beings because, just like ourselves, they are so vulnerable. Like us, other beings are completely lost in the misery of their afflicting emotions—aggression, attachment, jealousy, arrogance, and ignorance. In this way the world is mad. Everyone is acting out crazily. If you take a step back and observe any gathering of people, you'll notice that they are just trying to fulfill their desires and ambitions, their longings and needs, trying to soothe something aching in their hearts. Each person is in a bubble, with no recognition of the world, not noticing anything, just fixated on his or her own concerns.

We hold this idea that life continues forever, yet in reality life is so sensitive and vulnerable. Like a foam bubble in the water, it can pop at any minute. But those living in this bubble have no notion or realization of that. This is why all sentient beings, including ourselves, deserve to be objects of compassion.

There is a tremendous amount of greed, along with tremendous pain stemming from it. We have so much stress in our speedy, driven minds and lives, and so many hopes and fears. We have so many notions about success and failure, about "us" and "them." From our own experience we can clearly see all of these as suffering. All of us are caught in this madness and suffering, so we have to develop compassion toward all. We have to tap into the suffering of ordinary sentient beings, with ourselves as an example, realizing how much we suffer, and seeing others in exactly the same light. We all live in a madhouse with so many crazy people doing so many things, and each believing in what they are doing. Everybody has some notion of truth and thinks what they are doing is something wonderful and correct, but from the point of view of someone watching from a distance, it is all just craziness.

Beyond this, beings bring so much harm to the world, and to each other. There are so many conflicts, so much fighting, so many people hurting each other with weapons, so many wars happening in the world, and so much verbal aggression. Conflict and violence circulate back and forth, back and forth, even in our everyday domestic circumstances. Television, movies, theater, are all about conflict. In some ways, people go to movies precisely because they touch this condition, because the movies hit home. So people are willing to pay money to watch it played out. But you don't have to pay money, you could just watch it in your own mind, or in your domestic situation or small community. Soap operas are happening everywhere, all the time. The drama of suffering is everywhere, all the time.

If we can develop compassion in this way, then we can affect ourselves and others by changing our perspective. This perspective is that all of this happens not from will, but from ignorance; not out of choice, but out of confusion; not intentionally, but as a result of being poisoned. Recognizing this, we must develop compassion towards sentient beings.

We are not only speaking about human beings, but also about animals. If you watch any nature show on TV you can see it quite clearly. Animals have such great fear of being eaten

by others. It's incredible to see how much they are harmed by one another, and by the environment. With this in mind, we can develop compassion toward animals.

Similarly, there is so much suffering in the hell and hungry ghost realms, in the asura realms, and even in the heaven realms. So we must develop compassion, knowing that all suffering occurs out of ignorance and delusion. Since only the buddhas and bodhisattvas are free from delusions, we must develop compassion toward all sentient beings.

Compassion is the wish for all beings to become free from delusions and ignorance, free from the misery and suffering of being caught in delusion, as if caught in a bubble. We also need to develop kindness, which means wishing that all beings obtain happiness—the ultimate happiness of enlightenment, as well as the various types of relative happiness. Focusing on compassion, we should be as helpful to others as we can, bringing them to a better place. With kindness, we must try to nurture and cherish others as much as possible. This is how we should develop and engage in this second magnificent consciousness.

Cleansing All Grudges

Third, we must cleanse all our grudges: those that have taken root, with aggression evident in our mind; and those present as tendencies, seeds. If we don't eliminate all grudges, we will not live in peace, we will not sleep well at night. We tend to hold onto a lot of grudges from the past, and allow grudges to increase in the present. During the day we have interactions with so many people who provoke us and bring about unpleasant feelings. Since we are not steeped in this practice of cleansing grudges, our mind immediately creates and holds grudges against others. Even if it doesn't manifest immediately as harm to others, a grudge creates ill will, and harm eventually emerges. So before that happens, we must look at our mind each day and night and cleanse any grudges we are holding. This applies to anything that gives even a slight feeling of discomfort. All of this "discomfort food" of our mind comes from grudges, so as soon as we feel anything, we should cleanse it immediately.

We have to develop tolerance and patience, not for others' sake, but for our own. The main thing at risk here is our own peace. We have no greater priority than to preserve our peace of mind, our joyous, cheerful state of mind. The core of this practice is to constantly cleanse the heart of any dirt or debris of grudges. By doing so we can become like the Kadampa, always remaining peacefully in a joyful state, without any disturbance whatsoever. If we do not cleanse our heart, then it will be difficult to remain in this state of mind. Instead we may become like the monk in Patrul Rinpoche's example. In describing this monk, people say, "Oh, he's a great monk, but he has quite a temper." Patrul Rinpoche suggests that if you have a temper, then no matter how great you appear to be in other ways, you cannot be a great monk at all.

No negativity is greater than aggression and anger. Nothing is more powerful than anger, because it destroys any sense of peace and joy in your life and in others' lives. Therefore, among all the practices, there is nothing more significant and precious to develop than patience and tolerance. Before we reach a state of anger, we must cleanse the "*yi mi dé wé zé*" [*yid mi bde ba'i bzas*], which in Tibetan means eating "mind-disturbing food"—in other words, that which causes the disturbance.

Disturbing emotions always come from some kind of grudge, resentment, or lack of appreciation. We must appreciate all that comes to us, even what is disturbing. We must try to get beyond our resistance, beyond the dualism of "pleasant" and "unpleasant," "joyful" and "not joyful." We must try to see it all as equal, not resenting the unpleasant; try to

develop equanimity, and cleanse our mind of any poisonous grudges and resentment. If we succeed, we will never become irritated.

If you think about it, irritation is illogical. You get irritated with one person, but not with someone else. If irritation is really uncontrollable from your side, then why become irritated with one person, but not with someone else? Why do we get irritated with someone we regard as inferior, but suck up to someone we look up to? It is totally undemocratic and biased. Nobody gets irritated when in control. We have a lot of control when relating to kings or queens, with high ministers or high lamas; but with ordinary folks we get irritated all the time. We must recognize that this is illogical, and also quite petty. We need to move beyond this pettiness, and develop equanimity, patience, and tolerance toward everyone.

If we can do this with even one person, then why not with others? If we can do this with our neighbor, then why not with our husband or wife? Our behavior should be equal.

Remember that this should be done with the belief of, "I can do it!" rather than "I can't." When you think, "I can't, it's too hard," you're shifting gears to go downhill. But when you say, "I can, it's possible, I will," you're making a shift to move uphill. Downhill or uphill, it's up to you. If you are going down now, you will keep moving down in this life, and into the lower realms in the next life. If you are going up, you will benefit tremendously in this life, and as the result of patience, there will be tremendous benefit in your following lives, particularly in your spiritual path. So make sure you have the gearshift in your hand, and know that how you shift is your choice, not something out of your control. In this way we can develop patience and let go of all our grudges.

Another point to think about is why we hold on to grudges. Usually it is because we feel something is unfair and wrong. But look at yourself. Are you fair? Are you decent? Are you in any way different from others? Often we are not, so who are we to point at someone else and hold a grudge? Try to develop patience and tolerance, and then you won't have any problems or complaints, or any one-sided rationales about things being fair or unfair, reasonable or unreasonable. That type of logic won't even occur to you, since patience is the greatest virtue of all, and when it is firmly established in your mind, many of your heart's weaknesses will completely melt away. Challenges will then be much more welcome. For these reasons too, we must develop patience.

We should also ask ourselves, "Why do I get angry when somebody does something wrong?" Why did the person do it? Was it intentional or unintentional? We always think it's intentional, but often it's not at all. For it to be intentional, people have to hold their intention in their hands, but much of the time people have no control. Just as you sometimes have no will to control your temper or wrong actions, other sentient beings are vulnerable in that same way. So we should see ourselves and others as being equal in terms of vulnerability and not having complete control, even in regard to the intention to harm someone else. These all come from the poison of ignorance, and if you add poison to poison, it will become more poisonous. There will never be a great outcome from adding poison. This is another reason we must develop patience and eradicate all our grudges.

We should ask ourselves frequently, "Why am I angry and irritated? Why am I holding a grudge?" As I mentioned, usually it is because we think somebody intended to do something negative towards us, but it is unlikely that the person was even aware they had done something mean, let alone held the intention of acting harmfully. The person is usually not aware of being malicious, yet we decide to hold a grudge and create an aggressive situation based on the idea that he or she has been hostile to us personally. A person may even have a

lot of respect or affection for you, and hold kind thoughts about you. So you see, sometimes such negativity comes entirely from your projections spinning out of control. Since we have many experiences of that kind, we must realize whenever we hold a grudge that we could just be in one of those projections. So why not just cleanse it? What does it hurt? It is much better to cleanse it and be at peace, than to dwell on it until you have no energy left to do anything but fall into depression. What's the point of that? When you dwell on your grudges, you bring such unhealthiness into your mind, and lead yourself into depression. So if you feel any responsibility to safeguard your well-being, then grudges are the main things you need to eliminate to protect this most important part of your life. The third magnificent consciousness then is getting rid of all grudges.

Confessing Misdeeds

The fourth is confessing wrongdoings and violations of precepts. You must confess misdeeds because as soon as you confess, you let go. If you let go from deep within, then the misdeed doesn't belong to you anymore, and your conscience becomes clear and pure. By confessing, whatever was done out of ignorance becomes something separate from your deep level of conscience and wisdom mind. So confess honestly, genuinely, and as often as possible with all the strength necessary to allow this deep release. Try to develop that strength, and cultivate the ability to confess, particularly to the Three Jewels, since they have no judgments. They see clearly how everything takes place out of ignorance, because of your karma and negative tendencies. They are so compassionate and attentive, always present to hear you and offer help. You never have to feel embarrassed, ashamed, or guilty, nor feel that you cannot confess to them. They see everything clearly, with no separation from you. Try to embrace the enlightened mind as a witness, then confess what is in your mind—all your wrongdoings and broken precepts. Doing the practice in this way is incredibly powerful.

It is said that the moon can be eclipsed temporarily, but soon regains its complete brightness. Similarly, noble beings may be under the influence of negativity, but as soon as they confess and purify, they regain all their strength.

The only positive thing about negativity is the fact that by confessing, it can be purified. We must take advantage of this opportunity. It is particularly helpful to confess in the presence of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas, since they already see our negativity with their wisdom eyes. When somebody completely understands and has compassion for us, and is present to hear about our vulnerability, we don't have such a problem honestly confessing. So we should acknowledge that the enlightened mind has these characteristics of openness, compassion, and complete understanding of our vulnerability. The enlightened ones are totally nonjudgmental and always ready to provide the blessings to wash away our negativity, so we must not feel there is any distance between us and them. We also shouldn't feel unworthy of confessing, because this unworthiness comes from our habit of holding on to the ego. We may ordinarily feel a need to hold on to ego, but in front of the Three Jewels there is no reason to do so, because they see clearly how everything is a problem of our ego. So we must continually try to confess.

Atisha always carried a mandala with him, and as soon as any negative thought would come, he made a mandala offering to purify and confess it. Similarly, many of the great teachers would immediately do a *satto*, a Vajrasattva mantra, as soon as any negative thought arose. Like them, we should always confess, especially when negative emotions are attacking us, and we feel weak, vulnerable, threatened, and disoriented, like a bird hit by a

stone. Precisely at these times, we must gain strength by sitting still and confessing all that is happening in our mind.

In conjunction with this, we should realize how we can be tremendously benefited by taking greater vows and precepts, and by deepening the vows and precepts we have already taken. By striving to integrate these precepts into our everyday lives, we will discover that we are already full of the wisdom we need to work with our minds, and to apply the precepts and discipline. A manual of discipline that comes from outside is just a starting point; true discipline has to be learned from our own intelligent mind, our wisdom mind shining through and teaching us how to discipline ourselves.

In order to do this, we must first have confidence that it is possible. But if we have learned how to create samsara, why couldn't we learn these other things as well? We have to be willing to put time into it, but what else is there to do—drink coffee and chit-chat in coffee shops all the time? That's useless. The essential thing in life is to be able to sit down and think clearly about what's important—which is working with your mind, particularly in the areas where it fails again and again, where it brings you so much suffering.

Renouncing Negativity

The fifth magnificent consciousness is developing renunciation toward all the negativity you have ever done. Think about this negativity, and how harmful it is to you and others. All ten negative actions and five negative emotions are “negative” because of their nature, the sensation they produce, and the outcomes they bring. They are not labeled negative without reason.

In the Buddhist context, an action is negative when it is ignorant by nature, when its sensation is painful, and when its outcome is suffering. In this manner, we can understand that all negative actions are detrimental. For instance, the nature of anger is ignorance. When we get angry, we lose our clarity and awareness, and have no sense of what is happening to our mind, no perspective of its true nature. The sensation of anger burns us in the core of our heart. It feels like lava flowing, burning inside our heart, almost like we are dying. So in terms of sensation, anger is tremendous pain. Then, if we get angry enough to kill someone, we will have to endure a jail sentence in the short term, and in the long term, suffer for eons in the lower realms.

Similarly, attachment and jealousy have ignorance as their nature, produce sensations of discomfort and suffering, and have harmful short and long-term results. So we must realize how the negative actions and negative emotions are dangerous, and restrain or abandon them.

Conversely, we must realize the beneficial effects of positive actions. By nature, they are awake and aware; in sensation, they are pleasant and peaceful; and their fruits, both short- and long-term, are abundant benefit. When we feel genuine compassion, the nature of our mind is awake. Even if not suffering ourselves, we can truly understand the suffering of others. We can make a deep connection in our mind, and have a deep awareness of how pain affects another person. When we feel compassion, there is a sense of wakefulness, courage, and vivid, translucent mind. Total compassion for another person liberates us from our ego cocoon. The tightening in our heart that we have struggled with in the past melts away, and we feel tremendous joy and pleasure.

When we can do something to help another, the short and long-term fruits are enormously beneficial, both for the other person and for ourselves. I think this is why a lot of

people are attracted to hospice work, working with death and dying. Usually, when we're able to serve someone, we have a lot of hope and fear centered on what we might get out of it. But when we see someone who is dying and so vulnerable, it does something to our mind. We can't have these hopes and fears so prominently, so we come closer to having genuine compassion, which touches our heart deeply, liberating us from our cocoon.

Usually we carry our cocoon with us wherever we go. But being close to the dying pops our cocoon, because we realize how stupid it is to live our lives worrying about the rearrangement of furniture in a house that is burning down. In the presence of the dying, we see this more clearly, so the cocoon pops. Then we feel lighter, liberated from the burden we usually carry. The long-term benefit of compassion is great benefit for ourselves and others. Compassion gathers into us all the noble qualities of the Dharma and the enlightened mind. It's the ultimate hook that catches all the noble qualities of enlightenment at once.

We should not think of even a small amount of compassion as insignificant. There is a saying, "Don't think that small negative actions don't matter. The fire from a single spark can burn the entire forest." Similarly, we shouldn't think that small positive actions are insignificant, because single drops gathering together can eventually produce a great lake. With this in mind, we must increase positive actions and decrease negative actions, through having an objective mind, not biased toward particular people or toward ourselves.

Cultivating Discrimination

The sixth magnificent consciousness is determining our actions by intelligence and not by emotions. When we are critical of ourselves through intelligence, we can distance ourselves from negativity and misdeeds. But when we are critical of ourselves through our emotions, we get confused, and cannot make a positive change. It becomes a case of "bad me" and produces a guilt trip. If we use the emotions of our ego, then it is like the traditional image of a crocodile that eats its own tail, and grows bigger and bigger. Ego feeds on itself, which is not helpful.

Developing Fearlessness

The seventh is developing fearlessness in this life, and toward the next life. When people are fearful of the next life, they tend to ignore it, pretending it doesn't exist. They focus totally on this life and become nihilistic. Then they tend to engage in self-indulgent behavior, which brings about many negative results.

We can develop fearlessness toward the next life by mindfully observing our actions and bringing discipline to the three doors of body, speech, and mind. We also nurture fearlessness by increasing our understanding and wisdom, so that we accumulate positive karma to purify this life's negativity, and bring positive fruit into our next life. When we are diligent in purifying the negativity of our three doors, we can look forward to the next life. Just as when we plant a seed in the earth, we can expect a fruit to appear, so too can we expect the fruit of positive discipline to manifest. You don't plant a seed in the ground just for the fun of planting it; you plant it so you can harvest the fruit. Similarly, if your intention and dedication are vast, when you apply positive discipline with the three doors, abundant fruit will manifest in the next life. For this reason, we should not be afraid of the next life. Instead, we should actually look forward to it, turning against any nihilist views and tendencies, such as self-indulgence or denying the existence of the next life.

This perspective is helpful because it provides a vision of how to live in this life, how to become fearless and look ahead confidently. If you expect something wonderful to happen tomorrow, then today will be pleasant as well. If you are engaged in positive actions, you can feel at ease about a good next life. And not only will you be able to reap the fruit in the next life, but this life will also be good. This gives us a lot of confidence to act beneficially and be at ease in this life.

Impermanence Dawning in Our Heart

The eighth is the realization that all compounded things are impermanent and come to an end. There's the saying: "Anything that goes up must come down. Anything that is built eventually turns to ruin. Anyone who is high, is at some point brought low. Anyone who is born will die. Anything that grows will eventually come to an end." When we understand that all compounded things are impermanent in this way, then our own suffering, no matter what it's like, becomes just part of the phenomenal world, so we don't take it personally. It is all part of the law of how things are in this world. There is no sense in dwelling on your discomfort or suffering as a punishment, curse, or tragedy inflicted upon you. You can develop a sense of detachment, or what I mentioned previously, *dō chung chok shé*, "little desire, great contentment." With this outlook, you can become intrigued by the phenomenal world and how things run their own course; and then you can learn how to live in accord with that course. To have this contentment dawn in your heart is very helpful.

When impermanence first dawns in your heart, it helps motivate you in your Dharma practice. Then it increases your diligence, and finally, it transforms into deathlessness, or the *dharmakaya* state. Therefore it is important to maintain the view that all compounded things are impermanent.

Nothing Intrinsic

The ninth magnificent consciousness is realizing that the entire phenomenal world, including oneself, has no intrinsic nature or ego; which is to say that everything is illusory, like a dream. Everything is none other than interdependent origination¹⁸ and its appearance. When we have that realization, our heart and mind feel so much lighter and transcendent. Try to meditate on the interdependent origination of all things. Meditate on all things as elusive and illusory, like a dream, a rainbow, an echo, a mirage, or a magician's display.¹⁹ This is how to keep from being so solidly fixated.

Appreciation of Nirvana

The tenth is feeling inspired to put an end to our own suffering and the sufferings of others, by no other means than the realization of the truth itself. Realization of the truth is *nirvana* since that truth is the cessation of all suffering. So we must become inspired by the fact that

¹⁸ Interdependent origination: (Tib. *tendrel*) the principle that nothing is independently existing but relies upon causes and conditions to come into existence, abide and cease. Since everything is interdependently originated, everything is likewise empty of intrinsic existence.

¹⁹ There are eight traditional similes of the illusory nature of phenomena: an echo, a dream, a magician's display, a mirage, a city of *gandharvas*, a hallucination, a reflection of the moon in water, and an apparition. Sometimes a rainbow is included in this list as well.

there is truth to be realized, and that this truth is the cessation of all suffering and all illusions. This is the tenth magnificent consciousness.

Please work to develop these consciousnesses. When you are aren't busy, go through them, and when you have more time, listen to the recordings. When you have even more time, try to really contemplate them. Bring all the Dharma knowledge and understanding that you have accrued into developing these ten magnificent awarenesses or consciousnesses.

Questions and Responses

Student: Rinpoche, I have a question about how to work with the relative and the absolute at the same time. You mentioned having the courage to face your own mind. So when you're working with the content, you're working with relativity. And in practice, when you want to be able to really work with that, you have to go into the ultimate so to speak?

VDKR: You have to gain a little bit of stability in order to rest in the absolute while having thoughts and emotions, and still be able to function. So first you just work in each place, and as you develop more stability resting in the nature, you will become more and more able to do this.

Student: It seems that when you're working with the relative, it has such a reality.

VDKR: But as you move on in the path, it changes. So for that you just rest in the absolute more and bring it to a more stable point.

Student: Rinpoche, I've heard some teachers mention something about the timing of confession, that a confession must be made within three years?

VDKR: Oh no, it's okay to confess any time. You could confess things that you have done millions of years before. That's fine.

(Continued)