

Defeat the Klesha

Part One: By the determination to preserve the ethical commitments that we have taken.

Dharma roadside dialogue series.

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#1 Expose

This is the first expose' of 2022, and as sometimes people use the first of the year to make resolutions, here we will make the great resolution to defeat the kleshas. Ambitious, very ambitious. Hopefully this resolution will last longer than many first of the year resolutions...like going back to the gym or to stop eating chocolate;~}

Defeating the kleshas is a long process, it is an intention of what we are going to do along the path to enlightenment; and and at times we are defeated by the kleshas. Win some and lose some, but anyway, we keep the fighting spirit and are still working on it. I offer three angles to work with kleshas because we are at different times, or different moments, in our individual stories and our individual journey on our way to enlightenment, so we need different tools; it's not that we all can use the same tools. When the Buddha taught, he taught not out of a cookie cutter standard, one size fits all...but rather presented in a super skillful way different ways of approaching the work and finding our own way to liberation. And sometimes in his teachings in person back then, or reading in the sutras in modern times, we have our own personal understanding of what we read or hear. It's like we have a little window open and the sun passes, and at some point there is one ray of light that comes into our house and illuminates our room. But actually if we were not trapped by this narrow little window we could see that the sun is there and that it fills the entire space. So sometimes one aspect of the Dharma talks to us very, very personally and very directly. It feels like he is speaking directly to you, like, "This sutra was written for me." We resonate with it. This shows that it is very important for us to understand what is the most appropriate tool that we can use, and that's why I want to offer these three angles..I don't have the ambition to cover all three today, so let's start with the first and see how far we get, and continue in future sessions. We have time, and what is important is that it hits home, that we get it, and then we can work with it.

So, three angles to approach this subject. The first one is, **"By the determination to preserve the ethical commitments that we have taken."** I will explain this as we go on.

The second approach is, **"By unlimited love and compassion."**

This will cover mostly what is at the heart of sending and taking practice, and for that I will use the instructions of Khenpo Munsel. He was the guru of Garchen Rinpoche who is an elder Rinpoche now residing in Arizona, I believe.

The third angle of approach to the kleshas is, **"By the depth of our discernment."** That's turning affliction into practice. Here I took an excerpt from Shamar Rinpoche's *Boundless Wisdom*, in the

mahamudra section of the text where he talks about turning affliction into practice. The “turning into practice,” which we will see in the following sessions, is a very common theme of a lot of Tibetan Buddhist masters.

There is a cycle of teachings that came from Milarepa, through Maitrepa, through Rechungpa, and after that through Tsangpa Gyare which in English is called the Six Cycles of Equal Taste, or in Tibetan ‘ro nyom kordruk.’ It’s six ways of bringing kleshas to the path...adversity to the path, sickness to the path, death to the path and so on and so forth. This is a very common theme that has been developed by many teachers; many commentaries have been written about it. So this is what we will see at the very end when, basically, you could say, our mind gets more and more ready for it through the practice of the first two exercises.

The first one is how to wrestle with the kleshas using the “determination to preserve the ethical commitments.”

When the path is described in the classic Buddhist literature, you can see it described as the Eightfold Noble Path, you can see it described as the Five Paths, you can see it also described as the Three Trainings. The three trainings are ethics (sila), meditation (samadhi), and that of discernment wisdom (prajna). These three trainings work synergistically, you can't really have only one. For example you can't just take meditation without an ethical lifestyle while not aiming at discernment, which is really the key for liberation. And you cannot have discernment if you haven't simplified and clarified your lifestyle and have a stable mind. So they are really working in synergy and are a very important reference point as far as the path is concerned.

Now I'd like to talk about what in my opinion is really the beginning of the path. Like when you say, “Okay, I took refuge, there was a ceremony, someone cut my hair and gave me a funny name, so I took refuge.” And that's the beginning. But there is so much more before that, so much more before that. Such as why you took refuge. Maybe it was just a coincidence, like someone said such and such Lama was giving refuge and encouraged you to do it, and you just did it. But then you have to think afterwards about why you did it...otherwise you are not going to sustain it, right? So there is much, much more before the actual ceremony, let's say. And I would like to connect this with the Four Truths of the Noble Ones, which are really the groundbreaking teachings of the Buddha.

The first truth is the acknowledgement of how conditioned we are by our own ignorance, by our own tendencies, our own emotional reaction to situations that are mostly out of our mental consciousness (more of a very gut feeling and subconscious)...and also all the consequences, the backlash of all the actions that we have done in the past that conditioned all of that. To be really, really aware of this, this awareness of how we are conditioned, will guarantee the desire to get free from that. If we are still in denial there's no chance that we can really embrace the path leading to liberation, because it is a path of letting go of a lot of things, and if we haven't discovered or agreed upon the fact that they are toxic...we are never going to let them go. Maybe what can happen is that

whatever effort we do on the path will be just more food for the confused mind, just another object of satisfaction and pleasure that's called 'Dharma.' So it's very important to consider this and, as I put in my notes for this session if you received my email, is, "Firstly, assess the reality of suffering and let go of the constant effort to deny it in an endless quest for the ideal object." Firstly, assess the reality of suffering that comes from being in a conditioned situation, and let go of the constant effort to deny it in an endless quest for the ideal object...the distraction, the noise we make to cover the silence of the reality of our condition and the painful nature of this conditioning. Denial is a very powerful energy that uses everything that is available to hide what "shouldn't" be seen for any reason.

Incidentally, when I was preparing these discussions I was watching on YouTube a class of a French philosopher Andre Comte-Sponville, who was teaching at the Sorbonne or somewhere, and he used a line from Schopenhauer, mentioning, "He is the most merry philosopher among all of them." Very joyful...not!!!

Schopenhauer says, "Life swings like a pendulum, backward and forward between pain and boredom." And Andre Comte-Sponville says to his students like, "I hope you're not contemplating suicide because of that line."

Life swings like a pendulum, backward and forward between pain and boredom. "According to Schopenhauer, suffering is the basis of human existence...(sounds very Buddhist, right?) It is suffering to exist comes from the fact that man, this machine to desire, is ceaselessly disappointed with the satisfactions. As soon as desire is satisfied, there comes other desires, which must be fulfilled. It is the Will to live, in other words instinct, which makes us desire, but as soon as we kill desire in us, it is boredom that emerges, the emptiness of the heart. Thus man is torn between this double threat, which constitutes a certain source of his misfortune."

Basically you have the driving force of desire for an object. And as Gendun Rinpoche once or actually several times told me, the objects of desire are painful as long as you don't have them. You're frustrated, you want to have them, but also the desire creates a driving force, this is what in the Buddhist world literature we call the World of Desire; this is the driving force. We are pushed towards the future, we are pushed toward actions because we want to achieve something that we consider as pleasant. Desire is pushing us forward. But when we have achieved that which we wanted to have, the thing that we wanted to have, then the driving force stops because you have what you wanted so there is no more desire. And as you don't have desire, you see boredom surfacing; you're bored with what you had. Though you desired it badly, now that you have it you don't really care. It's like old chewing gum, the strawberry flavor is better when the chewing gum is still in the package. Once you have it and you chew it, after a while you lose the flavor and you just have a piece of plastic, and then you're bored. Then, as Schopenhauer says, then you need to have more desires, you need to reignite, rekindle this desire, because of boredom. Boredom is unpleasant, so you run away from boredom and you run towards a new object of desire. You keep repeating,

doing the same thing. You have it, it loses its taste, you're bored, then you have desire, and desire is painful as long as you don't have the object, but when you have the object you're bored.

Gendun Rinpoche would explain this using an unpleasant object, like he would use as an example unpleasant and difficult situations in life; sometimes you can avoid them and have a provisional happiness, but you worry, there's anxiety that it might come back, like when you have a sickness and you overcome it but you're not sure it's fully out of your system there is still a little anxiety that it might relapse. Okay? So you're not really fully happy, when you are successful you manage to dodge what you didn't want to collide with, you're kind of happy but not fully ecstatic. Then there is the moment that you cannot avoid, that is simply pain, you're just crushed and overwhelmed and you suffer. So whether you like it or not it's not going to bring any permanent and stable form of satisfaction. That's the dis-ease, the lack of ease, the lack of contentment that we experience most of the time. But as the Buddha said, and as Schopenhauer says, we are pushed forward by desire towards something that very quickly we don't care about, and then because we feel boredom we need to propel ourselves toward another object, that maybe we will reach, or maybe not. We reach it and after a while we are bored, if we don't reach it, we are frustrated. For Schopenhauer that's the fate of man, the fate of human beings.

The emptiness of the heart that pushes us toward desire, the desire that brings us boredom, and the emptiness of the heart that pushes us towards desire, and so on. It's making a very blunt statement, that's who we are. But what I like about the Buddha, he says, "Hey, there's a way out." That's what I like about the Buddha's teaching, there's a way out...but I think the analysis of the reality of suffering by Schopenhauer, even if a little bit sad and cynistic, is accurate...it's quite accurate. So you see, that's the key point, that's where the path begins. That's where the bodhi path, the path towards liberation, begins. When you know that you're trapped, and you're trapped by your own making, trapped by your own ignorance and the consequences of the ignorance, and you're not trying to deflect this reality, not trying to deny this reality or throw some glitter and make-up on top of it to make it look like it's nice, and pretend you didn't see that and then run towards something exciting, living your life fully denying what is happening. That's not what the Buddha taught.

Be aware of your situation. Yes it's hard to take, yes it's not really pleasant and yes, you can see the old habit cropping up of pretending it doesn't exist by looking in the other direction and making some noise to cover up this new experience. But this experience is vital, because that's where the path really begins. In my opinion if you haven't reached this point, you are like somebody who has a drinking problem and attends meetings, but doesn't really understand how toxic alcohol is. You haven't embraced this, you haven't hit rock bottom. And that's the prerequisite, even in the twelve steps, and it's the same on the bodhi path. You have to hit rock bottom and assess it, and accept that this is the reality. Schopenhauer is heavy and this is heavy, it's not meant to be funny, it's meant to be awakening.

So what do we do at this point? In the synopsis it says, "Secondly, rely on refuge and individual liberation vows (pratimoksha) to break toxic habits while nurturing the virtuous spiral leading to enlightenment."

So this will be really entering the path of Dharma. First, rely on refuge. What does it mean? When you come to this point where you assess the reality of suffering, you need to understand that you can no longer use the usual habits and reactions and patterns, because they haven't proven successful...since beginningless time!! You need to find a new strategy. A new strategy means a goal and a set of methods or a path that is leading to this goal, and in times of weakness, and in times when you need to be enlightened, you need to be able to rely upon trustworthy companions or spiritual friends. That's your foundation. And this has to be really clear in your mind. So when you take refuge, whether you take refuge in your heart in front of a Buddha statue by yourself, or you take refuge during a ceremony organized by the Sangha in a more ritualized way (which more or less in the end comes to the same thing), if you have really developed this understanding of how toxic old habits are and were, and how you aspire to free from this, then Buddha the enlightened state becomes truly your goal.

Buddha the enlightened state expresses itself also in Buddha the teacher, the Buddha Shakyamuni. So the informal aspect of Buddha the enlightened state, the Dharmakaya, takes form in the form of the Buddha Shakyamuni, as the historical teacher or as the teachers we may meet in our life like Karmapa, and so on and so forth. They give a face or presence to the informal Dharmakaya, Buddha the enlightened state. But that's our goal, that's where we are going, that's the final and ultimate goal. The teachings are just a way to go, the spiritual friends of the Sangha are the assistants and guides on the way. The only refuge that is final and ultimate is Buddha the enlightened state. So once we have this very, very clearly established in our mind, even if we don't really know what enlightenment is, we need to somehow define a goal and we set on a certain course, and even if it's quite elusive we can nourish this aspiration by understanding, for example, the life of the Buddha; how he went through what he went through to reach enlightenment, and how he shared it; or how our own teachers did...and we come to see the qualities in these men or women and we come to see the Dharma. We can see the Dharma in the way they behave, how they use their body, they use their speech, and as much we can see of their mind...we can see their intentions and we can see the Dharma being there. So we can see, through them, the qualities of Dharma; they help us to understand what the qualities of Dharma are.

Buddha the teacher exemplifies what Buddha the enlightened state means, by showing us the path to reach this. So that's the first refuge. And then the important thing when you take refuge is that you also have commitments that are related to each aspect of the refuge. The commitment when you take refuge in the Buddha, which to me is very interesting, is that you take the commitment of this one sole refuge, and you're not going to cut side deals with other refuges. When push comes to shove, when it's really difficult, you often try to cut a deal; to find a way to get around the cost and

still have what you want...like almost the same, but for half the price. We cut the deal but, but no, in this case you work with the real thing.

Of course, you do find provisory refuges...like your parents when you're a kid, your family, you can find a partner that's gonna be a very important help and support on your path, and that's fine. Or a community of friends, or whatever. But all these people, they can't give more than what they have. And as they are not enlightened, they can't give you, they can't lead you, to Buddha the enlightened state because they have no idea how to go and where to go. It's important to deal with the real thing. And on a more personal level it means that you are going to deal with your life and all aspects of your life from a point of view of, as Trungpa Rinpoche would say, the "brilliant sanity of enlightenment." Which is a form of expression of fearlessness. We are not cutting corners, we are not cutting deals, we are not trying to get some sort of ersatz for half the price. We're just going to work with the real thing.

And for that we need a very well exposed path...and that's Dharma. And that's when Dharma becomes our refuge, and maybe here it's important to say why we use the word refuge. 'Kyab,' in Tibetan. 'Kyab' means a sanctuary, somewhere...a state, a direction, a companionship where you don't have to be on your guard all the time. You can relax and be true to yourself, and be open because you know that you are loved, not judged, and everybody is sincerely here to help you. So that's where and how it is a refuge. So it's kind of a shelter against outer difficulties, but it's also a shelter against your own madness. They will tell you if you're really out of your mind. And encourage you to just come back...come back. Because they are not here to please you, in a way, all these three aspects of refuge, they are not here to be your toxic friends and say, "Yes, you're good." They are not "yes" sayers. They are speaking from the point of view of brilliant sanity. The Dharma is doing the same thing.

The Dharma is not on your side, in the sense of your bodyguard, the Dharma is here to help you to grow. Let go of what needs to be let go of and nourish and cultivate what needs to be nourished and cultivated. That's what Dharma is for. And there are two aspects of the Dharma which I always find fascinating because they take into account the reality of our experience. There is one aspect which is the texts, the logic, the philosophy, the words...they are not the realization but they help us to understand what it is not. Okay? And they are very important because they cut through the jungle of our preconceived ideas and dogmas and old habits, and they point us towards a clear direction which we will have to explore.

The second aspect of Dharma is the Dharma of realization, which is, you make your own experience. And of course there is a lot of hit and miss, and that's why the Sangha is here...to help you to evaluate after the fact whether it was a smart decision or not, and learn from it.

That's the third aspect of refuge, then, the community of qualified spiritual friends...men and women who are like us, on the way, but are very generously and very honestly and very sincerely

wishing you well and trying to help you in as much as you are doing your work. So this becomes your foundation, your family in a sense. In the true sense of awakening. It becomes your foundation, you can stand on this and feel protected.

Then you begin your work. Then you begin your work in these good conditions that you have created with refuge in the three jewels and the confidence that you cultivate. Then the next step will be to clean up your mess, that's the idea of the vows of individual liberation. Individual in the sense of it's your own mess that you are clearing out, and your own qualities that you are bringing to the surface. You're not working on somebody else's problems or helping other people's qualities to come to the surface. At this point it's a very personal endeavor; it will have tremendous positive effects on other people because, as everything is interdependently connected, what is good for you eventually will be healthy and good for other people. And what is toxic for you will definitely, through interdependent origination production, interconnectedness, a simpler word maybe, it will also be negative and toxic for other people.

So basically what we are talking about is preserving life as much as we can, being honest, being frank. And as a lay person having a sexuality that is not predatory, is not humiliating or an expression of your frustration, by controlling and using other people's bodies for your own satisfaction because you have the power to do so; rather it's a very healthy sexuality based on love and exchange and mutual respect. And also be very careful of not losing the essential tool for your awakening which is mindfulness, by avoiding the confrontation with reality by using intoxicants of any form; legal or illegal. Keep your mind clear. This doesn't mean you can't have a good Bordeaux now and then, that's not the problem. That's not the point; the point is that you are not using these substances so that you can't see yourself because you are so ashamed. Or you feel helpless when confronted with some aspect of your personality that you need to escape.

These are five basic life guidelines. They will open up a lot of reflections. What is it to be preserving life? Being confronted with the harm that has come from eating animal protein, for instance. Or confronting yourself about whether you ever lie, really, or do you think it's a mere exaggeration? What we generally take for granted as being acceptable looked at under the microscope of your mindfulness can be horrifying sometimes...how self-centered we are. How everything is aiming at making "me" secure or satisfied. We hadn't seen this before, but because we build the railings of sanity in our life, and then we are always drifting and banging into this railing, which creates sparks, and we have to think woah, yeah, maybe doesn't really fit into, "I will try to preserve life," or "I will be honest." You have to question yourself.

The purpose of these commitments is not to make you miserable, even if sometimes you think it's the only purpose of these vows;~} They are here as a railing so that you don't jump off the cliff when you're drifting. It brings you back to some sense of sanity. And brings you back to the necessity for you to have a good look at your mind and your body and your speech and see what needs to be abandoned and what needs to be adjusted. That's the function of these vows of personal

individual liberation. And they are going to be a protection, but also they are going to be, equally as important, they are going to be the path through which you create a new virtuous ascending spiral of action through your body, speech and mind. That is where the battle of overcoming and defeating the kleshas comes in.

First I would like to clarify what the basis on which the kleshas arise. What is a klesha? The Tibetan word for klesha is *'nyon mong'* that generally speaking means affliction or painful burden. *'Mong'* means confusion. Confusion is basically when we think up is down, day is night; we have a wrong view of almost everything, distorted. That's confusion; we don't have what Rinpoche in his books often refers to as "clear knowing." Clear knowing, *'shes bzhin'* in Tibetan, will be the opposite of *'mongpa'*; the opposite of confusion. We know clearly, objectively, what things are. So, we don't have this and therefore it drives you crazy. Interestingly enough the first part of the tibetan word *'Nyon mong'* is an homophone of another tibetan word: *Nyeun* that means crazy. I can't help to draw a parallel between the two locution as they sound the same. It's a confusion that leads you to insane behaviors...thinking that what you do is right and appropriate. That's the *'nyon mong.'* Gendun Rinpoche once told us, "You know, let's say you want to go north, and everyday you drift away from this course by one degree. In a hundred and eighty days, you think you are walking toward the north but are actually heading south. One degree a day." And that's what these *'nyon mong'* are doing to us. They project a fantasy of what we are doing which has nothing to do with what we are actually doing. It's a confusion that throws us into pure madness. And of course as everything is interconnected, there will be consequences and backlash to all of the actions. And we will be surprised! "How come everybody hates me? I've been such a nice guy!" Yeah, in your dreams. So that's what kleshas really are.

In the classic literature you can find many descriptions of the kleshas, endless lists of the kleshas, the 100 forms of kleshas, if you study the 5 skandhas, and particularly the section on the 51 mental events will explain 26 afflictive states. In some other more standard descriptions there are the 5 kleshas; one is attachment, one is hatred, one is confusion, this *'nyonpa,'* and also arrogance and jealousy. But I like to keep it simple, because when it's simple you can't forget it. Like don't ask me what the 26 toxic things are out of the 51 mental events. The point is, what do you remember when you are on the battlefield? Let's make it simple then. Three major mental afflictions. Three mental afflictions.

One is fixation. Fixating on the desirable object, sometimes translated as desire, or attachment...but anyway there is this notion of fixation. The obsessive nature of this. The object is pleasant, and that's fine, there's no problem with the pleasantness...but there is a problem with the neurotic obsessive fixation.

The second one is the opposite. It's rejection. This is another form of fixation that is the fixation on being secure and satisfied, and whatever comes between my pleasure and me needs to be eliminated.

So it's exclusion, division, the fear of what is strange. It's threatening just because it's not what you want it to be. So exclusion. Pushing away.

And then the third one is confusion. We don't have a clear knowing. We live in a world of speculation, or projection, that comes from our own ideas of what is going on, who we are, and what we should have, and all of that. So these are the three kleshas, and before we come to the point where I'll say a few words about how you work with them, I'd like to come back to what I was saying first, which is, "On which basis do these three kleshas arise?" And for that I'd like to quote Vasubandhu in a text that is called "The Thirty," where there is one shloka where he explains how all of this works. It works on four types of veils that are always present. They all have to do with a sense of self.

The first one is '*da ta*'...the view about the self. We have a wrong view about what self is. We think that self is something autonomous, solid, permanent, changeless somewhat...kind of eternally going through time and adventures. So that's the view which influences all the rest; the first one: me, me 'da da.' !

The second one is '*da mong*'; confusion. We are back on the same word, confusion, and the confusion of the self is to believe it to be separate from what is not self. First you define what is self, and that defines what is not self that is "you." And so there is a confusion about this. Confusion about the fact that self and others are different. You believe they are not connected, they are two islands and have nothing to do with one another. So "I am," I am different.

Third, '*da (self) gyal*'. Arrogance. I am, I am different, I am superior. I am more important. And why do we think that we are more important? Because we are at the center of perceptions. Everything we see or we know through our sense or mental consciousness is known or assessed by us, by "me." So I'm kind of an important dude in this thing, I am the one who does all the appraisals. I'm the one who says, "That's good, that's kosher, that's not kosher." I've got an important job here, so I need special treatment. So that's '*da gyal*', the arrogance of the self.

And that leads to the fourth one, which is '*da chak*', fixation on the self. Fixation here can also be explained as over-cherishing "me". Because I'm superior, therefore I'm someone who feels totally entitled. I don't have to say why I have these things because I am superior...therefore, I have them, and if you want to take them I'll kill you. And if by any mistake you have something that belongs to me, I'll take it, and if you don't want to give it to me, I'll kill you. So that's the over-cherishing of the self, that implies that we deserve all the security and all the satisfaction in the world. So it's on this foundation of confusion that everything happens...I call it the misery machine. That's the foundation for misery.

So because you are, and you are different, and you are superior, and you are entitled, then you can steal, you can lie, you can cheat, you can abuse, and if it's too much, you can get high, just to have a

little rest, so you don't have to sort out all the repercussions of your actions. And you justify yourself by this logic. And this is so deeply ingrained, that we don't even know it consciously, it is part of our psyche, it is part of the way we operate. Like here in the U.S. there is a new word, or a new meaning to the word "woke."

It means you have to wake up to a certain reality. Like, I'm a middle-aged white guy, so here in America I got the winning ticket. Okay? I can have anything I want. And I'm totally unaware of other people, so-called minorities, which are actually becoming the majority in terms of numbers, and how underprivileged they are, and so forth. It's really hard, even if you're a nice guy, to understand; you can't really understand because you've never experienced that...that's the kind of confusion we are in. That's the confusion that prevents us from seeing the true nature of our mind. We are busy with a sort of smoke screen and we are operating on that basis.

Now how do we work with this? Regarding these 4 veils, the first one, 'da da'. We have to correct the view we have on the self. And how do we do this? First and foremost through the study of the 5 skandhas. When you really understand what is the self, which is just a synergy of different elements that work in interaction, none of them constituting a self, all of them working in interdependent interconnectedness, giving the impression of a self...so you readjust that the self is not a solid entity, but rather an impression that we have a solid entity. So that's how you correct it by studying.

And then by meditation. You practice very basic meditation, like the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness. You place your mindfulness, you zoom into one aspect, like, "Is the self in my physicality? Where in the body? Is it in the emotion? Is it in the feeling? Is it in the outer world?" And so on. And when we look for the self in this introspective meditation...we can't find it. Then suddenly a fixation on the self, the wrong view about the self, will be exposed as a fraud...through the study of the 5 Aggregates and the practice of the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness. So you readjust the view about the self.

The second one, 'da mong', is the confusion about the self. The confusion about the self is what is "me" and what is not me. Duality. Through the practice of calm-abiding you pacify this oppositional ping pong play. Through the practice of vipashyana you come to realize that subject and object are just two facets of the same mind and they do not stand as opposite entities, but they are just appearances that partake of the same essence of emptiness. So by the practice of vipashyana, prepared, of course, by the practice of calm-abiding, common vipashyana, I'm not even talking about mahamudra at this point, then the confusion about the self can be lifted. Then, in terms of study, at this point the most important is interdependent origination. How everything comes to appear through interdependent interconnectedness of interdependent production.

That will also help us to overcome the third aspect, or veil, that is the arrogance of the self. The arrogance of the self comes from feeling different, therefore superior. Because the difference in our particular position, the vantage point we have in the world, makes us feel that we are different...and

superior. But when you realize that actually the sense of the self is only something that operates in interdependent production, you come to realize it is a kind of equal taste, sort of one flavor of manifestation and sentient beings, and there is no one that is superior to the other, so the sense of the arrogance of the self will vanish.

And according to Gendun Rinpoche, when you do this all the other kleshas will dissipate; he never really targeted desire to be the major obstacle, he said arrogance is the worst...because when you feel different and superior it's the gateway to everything else. We were in the monastery, and he understood that we may have all been grappling with desire; he understood that, but as a secondary problem. The first problem comes from arrogance; you feel entitled, you're special...like Louis XIV. "Everybody must follow my rules except me, because I am the king." How many times have we seen this? Everyone should abide by the laws but me. Like, "I have this great realization, I am the great teacher, I am this, I am that," and you build up the arrogance of the self to justify why you don't have to follow the common rules. So arrogance is really the gateway to all the other kleshas according to Gendun Rinpoche, and in my own experience, so I tend to agree.

Then we come to this final veil, which is fixation on my security and my satisfaction, the over cherishing. When you have understood that there is a sense of equality among all beings, we are all the same, we are all aspiring to happiness, nobody wants to suffer...we have different orientations, different colors, whatever...on the surface we may seem different, man, women, whatever...but the bottom line is we are all the same. We are breathing, we are bleeding, and we don't want to suffer. So who is entitled to have more? It's just a mental construction. Nobody is entitled to have more. This should be equanimously shared by everybody. So how do you reach that? By studying mind-training literature and in particular in the section on relative bodhicitta, the reflection on the kindness of all beings. How they have been our mothers through many, many lifetimes and have been so generous and giving without asking anything in return. This makes your heart soft, supple, more flexible, and less fixed on "me." And then the practice of sending and taking, and so on, that we will probably see next time, will help you overcome this sense of over-importance.

So that's the foundation, these 4 veils. Through study and meditation we can gradually free ourselves from these 4 veils. Now, regarding the kleshas themselves, how do we deal with them?

First one: fixation on the desired object; obsessive fixation. It's about me being different and me entitled to have it. What we need to cultivate through the practice of meditation, because it's not going to happen by itself, are mindfulness *Dren-pa*, clear knowing *She-zhin* and also conscientiousness *Bak-yoe*.

We need to identify the kleshas as soon as they arrive...and that's why we study the 51 Mental Events. We want to give them a name and a definition so that when they arise we can immediately spot them. Obsessive possessive fixation. So instead of saying, "I'm so bad, I have this possessive

obsession and so on, which is not the best strategy, you just decide to drop it and embrace the opposite. So when you have an obsessive, neurotic fixation, give it away. Give it away.

You know, in Japan I've been told that if you compliment somebody for their beautiful necktie, it's built into their society that they have to give it to you. I think Buddhism has a little to do with this. Let's say, "Oh, I really like your sweater," or whatever. And then immediately there is a fixation on a pleasant thing, ahhh. "Thank you" and so on. That will lead to suffering because the fixation, when things change, will become painful. So if you receive a compliment, instead of tripping on it, give one back...from the heart, not just perfunctory, but really, from your heart. Find something to give back, with your words, with a smile and a little gentle touch. Give something back so that you overcome the usual reflex of grasping, fixating. And of course it will hurt, because we are so programmed to get and not to give, or to give in order to get more, that it hurts. And that's what I mean by the sparks, you know, when your actual situation collides with the railing of the sanity you try to develop. And you have to assess that, and look at that, and notice, "Wow, so many people are unable to let go, may I take upon myself this difficulty." Because I'm just going through exactly the same problem. "I'm doing the dishes, give me your plate...my hands are wet anyway." So that's how you will reverse the course of the usual fixation, by being generous.

When you notice that you're in an excluding mood...like, "I don't want to see these people, they are strange and they are strangers." Strange strangers. Therefore their food is strange, their language is strange, and they smell strange. So you're just like, push them out, call security. As soon as you notice this feeling of exclusion, immediately, instead of thinking, "Oh, I'm so bad," (a culpability trip, a guilt trip, which we don't need, it's not helping in any way), as soon as you notice it, because you've cultivated mindfulness, clear knowing and attentiveness, as soon as you notice it, cultivate the opposite. Be inclusive. "Let me try your food. Oh, I'd love to learn more about your language. Tell me about your country." Those sorts of things. So you break the pattern of exclusion by nourishing a new pattern of inclusion. And you will see many opportunities to do that throughout your life. Many, many.

And then the third klesha, which was '*mong pa*,' the confusion, not being able to know clearly, you don't have the clear knowing. As soon as you realize that in any given situation you're closing down, you're closing, you don't want to know, you don't want to think about something different, it's just too much...not only regarding aggressive people or strangers, but even regarding Dharma. You know, the 3 forms of patience, there is one patience which is the patience regarding Dharma. Dharma sometimes can be very, very provocative, it can really throw you off. Like totally destabilize your habits, your world, your way of seeing things and so on; it's mind blowing. So when your mind's about to be blown apart, there is a habit of closing and excluding. Dogmas, habitual thinking...all of this needs to go. Or open up...it doesn't have to entirely go, it needs to be aired. You need to bring a bit of air into your mind. So when something comes and it's challenging, embrace the challenge, as a reaction to closing.

And what your point of view is, explaining how you see things. Engage in a true and honest debate or discussion with the person or the situation. Dharma blows my mind. How come I'm so reactive? This word in the Dharma is pronounced 'renunciation' to our behavior. How come I am freaking out? Because, I can trip out listening to the levels of achievement, or "Oh yeah, I'm close to the fourth yoga of non-meditation." Huh? "Renunciation, I hate it. Vows, I hate them." When this comes into your mind, that's a sign of not clear knowing. You feel threatened, and close down. "Call security, throw the troublemakers out." Embrace this. Wow!

Like in ancient Greece, Socrates, who would receive students who came to him, and of course they were part of the establishment there, the rich kids of the rich city of Athens, and he would just throw them into disarray and doubt and basically take a sledgehammer and break down their ideas of who they were and what is good and what is wrong. And then when these artificial "buildings" had been broken down, in the open space he would ask them, "What do you think about this?" You need to have this kind of courage. If you don't have this courage you cannot receive guidance from someone like Socrates. It's very hard to fully embrace Dharma because there will always be aspects of Dharma that will really, really push your buttons; and you can't pick and choose Dharma. Like a friend of mine, who is a Lama, but still at odds with karma, still doesn't understand and doesn't believe; he says, "You can ask me to teach anything, but don't ask me to teach about karma." Kind of honest, in a way. So that's the remedy to confusion, to embrace the discomfort when your usual world is cracked open, and have the courage to embrace new views, to really embrace them and think about them and have a real exploration; enlarge the scope of your knowledge. That would be the remedy.