

## **The Great Yoga. Lojong.**

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Today I tried to put some questions and sources into a coherent theme. I want to start with one point in mind training in *The Path to Awakening* from Chapter 5, which deals with the signs of progress, or how to gauge your progress on the way to enlightenment. In general I think it's kind of childish, where am I, am I close to enlightenment, these kinds of questions? Close to enlightenment? Yes, you are, essentially you have never been closer to enlightenment because it is the very nature of your mind. But very far away because there is a universe of veils and stuff that need to be processed and walked through before we can encounter this reality that we are endowed with right now. So anyway, when and how and how far doesn't really apply, but sometimes it's good to give us a little bit of confidence that we are on the path. Just simply that; that we are not regressing, or gone astray. So that's why in the *7 Points of Mind Training*, the fifth one is dealing with this, and in particular in the last section in this chapter there are several yardsticks, as they call them, that you can use to gauge your progress. But the last one I thought is interesting, and in particular with the commentary of Rinpoche that I haven't seen before in the other translations or commentaries. Regarding what Rinpoche calls the "five great minds", as a sign of progress you would notice the presence of the five great minds.

In this last slogan in Chapter 5, which is "You are well trained if you can even withstand distraction," we've got an idea of where we are at, and where our practice could be at this moment of our journey, of our life. So let's just go to the text right now, it's in Chapter 5, the 22nd slogan. "In the moment of a negative thought or disturbance, if you can maintain your composure and naturally apply the methods to subdue it without feeling any strain, this means you are well trained." The point here is, is progress equal to "I don't make any mistakes." The answer is very clear...no. We are going to make a lot of mistakes along the way, you know, until enlightenment is full and complete, then we're gonna go astray. This is not really the problem with the question, really, at this point.

The question is: do we correct it? Do we become aware very quickly of the drift, and are we able to correct it? And here, and more particularly, are we able to see it being corrected without having to think too much about it. Meaning the realization is so deeply ingrained that if you drift you kind of surprise yourself to come back...back on your feet. And it's almost simultaneous. Ideally it will be simultaneous. You drift and come back. And there is almost no delay, or a very, very short delay between the two. So that's a sign of some sort of mastery you could say, or stabilization of our realization or understanding.

"The correction is quite automatic owing to your proficiency in practice." So that's the outcome of the practice. We can judge our practice to the short moment between drifting and correcting. And

obviously there are elements such as mindfulness that are engaged here. We're mindful of what's going on in our mind. Through the practice of shamatha we've cultivated mindfulness and then we've experienced first, a sense of relief, of contentment, of peace, then the capacity of seeing the thoughts come through and not be carried away, you are not engaging with the conceptual process all the time. You can see them arise and disappear without engaging, so that's another quality that comes from shamatha, and then the very important quality is what Shamar Rinpoche calls reflexive awareness. In metaphoric language we call it luminosity. But luminosity is also used in the mahamudra literature, and that means different things, but here in this case it means that the mind is able to know itself; not in its essence at this point because it's only shamatha practice, but in the way it reacts. You know when your mind drifts and you know and are aware of your hidden agendas. And you're not playing any drama, you are not trying to pretend you didn't do it and accuse somebody else of being the cause of your misery, you just see exactly what is happening in your mind, it's very, very clear.

So that's reflexive awareness. That's what we gain through shamatha practice, and this will show in our daily life when we drift, and then immediately correct. The mind is aware of the drift, and then applies whatever remedies will be necessary to come back. And so "even in the midst of an upheaval you can remain composed and continue to use the immediate conditions to train." So that means that you're not subject to breaks, like you are doing your practice and suddenly the world falls apart and then you are lost. You can do your practice, see the world collapse, and keep doing your practice. And we will see what practice means in this context later. Because you can relate immediately to your experience and what you have learned to integrate upheavals and challenges, or just mood swings to the stream of your practice. You know how to do that. You are "like an expert horseback rider, you won't fall off the horse even when distracted." Like you can even fall asleep and not fall off. So you can ride, the horse stumbles, but you don't fall. There is a part of your body that is sort of welded to the saddle. There is a sense of balance, you don't fall. You are in this movement, there is this awareness and this presence, even if you may be busy doing other things. That's the sign of being well trained, when we can withstand distraction.

"Being stable in your practice does not mean that you no longer have any self-grasping." Or emotional states. Sometimes it may happen that we question the presence of our spiritual maturity because we fall under the power of emotional states. Like we can be angry, or we can be arrogant, or lustful, jealous, or whatever. We're pretty much in a black and white appreciation of our spiritual path, and what we have achieved. It's either all or nothing. So if we notice that we can get upset or have desires for this or that, that means that our practice is not good. That's a very contrasted position, extremist in a way. There is no subtlety in that. And here Rinpoche points out the fact that yes, you do still have self centered fixations, yeah, of course. You still perceive everything in a dualistic fashion, yes, of course. But you notice it very quickly. You don't let yourself get carried away by this. Yes, now and then you have a little outburst of the klesha, but you notice it very quickly and immediately your training kicks in and you're not carried away. It's not about suppressing these outbursts of emotional reaction, it's about being aware of them and being aware

of the possibility that we might implement this and follow through words and actions and to surprise ourselves that we're not not doing this. We're like, "Wow, I didn't expect that from me. That was great! That was cool." So this gives you a sense that, yeah, something happened, because five years ago I would have ripped this person apart, but now I just thought about it for a second and I didn't do it. This is an object of rejoicing and appreciation, because we can notice a difference like this, between five years ago and now. And there are times where you actually have an outburst and say things that you regret, so you fall, and then there's a delay between the moment when you say or do things and the moment when you become aware of the drift and then come back. It's not linear. It just happens. But if you see that in the majority of opportunities there is an awareness of what's going on almost as soon as it happens this is a great sign of spiritual progress or that your practice is deepening...taking deeper root in the stream of your consciousness.

Regarding this Naropa once said to Marpa, "Your practice has attained a level like a coiled snake you are able to release yourself in one instant." It's very important because at this point, in particular in mahamudra practice, and we're currently studying this in *Boundless Wisdom*, it's not so much about suppressing even mental afflictions, but it's being able to notice them and immediately use them. In the mahamudra tradition, and in particular in the vipashyana or insight of mahamudra, we use the emotion to realize inborn wisdom, the nature of mind. It stops being a poison and becomes a nectar. And this capacity to switch from being in the emotional state and being aware of the emotional state...and using it to realize the nature of mind so as to transcend ignorance and duality will be definitely a sign of spiritual maturity, of spiritual progress. So the coiling snake is very interesting because if you are curious or go on National Geographic like I did on YouTube, you can look at the coiling snake, and that it takes time for the snake to coil. What was quite interesting to me was that the head goes first, naturally you would think that there will be a moment where the head will be stuck...but the snake has its head resting on this coiled body and it took some time for the snake to do that. But if there is danger or a noise, shfttt, in a very smooth manner the head leaves everything, and then the snake uncoils. It actually takes less time to uncoil than it took to coil up. So our mind builds up all sorts of things and then it sort of gets caught in its own creation and then an emotional outburst comes, and because of awareness the head leaves the body out. And this poison becomes a nectar. This confusion becomes wisdom.

I think in this series of advice that Naropa gave to Marpa, there was the fact that Naropa said, like, "You don't really have to change your character." Marpa was famous for being short tempered and somewhat attached to wealth and so on. There are many stories, like when he first met Naropa he had brought his inheritance from Tibet, that he had traded for gold dust, and then he gave this to Naropa and Naropa tossed it in the air. And Marpa fainted! Everything gone. And Naropa just touched the earth and everything turned to gold, and Naropa said, "To me everything is gold. I don't need your gold." It was very important that Marpa realized how attached he was to the manifestation of gold. We could think he could have just told him, that was crazy, that he doesn't have to be attached and keep the gold, that's what I would have done;~} But he was pointing out the point that you don't have to change your character, who you are in this moment. It's kind of like

slowing down the process of liberation. Because you have to get rid of all tendencies and, you know, we know that it's really hard to get rid of all tendencies. And then you have to build up new tendencies. It's a long process, and it will take 25,000 endless eons before you reach enlightenment.

In the mahamudra tradition you don't have to do this, you can shortcut the entire process by recycling the emotional outbursts. The snake coils, uncoil it! It was created by self ego's fixation, ego's reality fixation, relax that! If you come to that point "it will be evident that you have accomplished your practice when the five great qualities of mind arise." So what are these five great qualities of mind?

"The first one is bodhicitta, the enlightened mind attitude. The effect of a dominant and pervasive bodhicitta mind a complete feeling of satisfaction."

Wow, interesting! When bodhicitta is really not practiced, but is your mind, there is a sense of fulfillment, there is a sense of satisfaction.

While you continue to train your contentment is so strong that you have no desire for anything else. Here we can see that the cultivation of bodhicitta and the enjoyment comes from seeing bodhicitta taking its full place in the stream of our mind, is a way to transmute desire. Desire is projecting outside somewhere else, the idea of better...what we always try to achieve, we try going in this direction and try to achieve. And it's very elusive, because as with every entity that we conceive, it is impermanent, and therefore can not bring a sustainable form of contentment. We gain it for a while, and then it disappears. And then we are left with nostalgia, that drives us forward trying to find another object that will be a source of satisfaction. This applies in worldly objects, career, fame, money, sensory satisfaction, but also in a way with Dharma practice. Like, "My practice is not good enough, I must go somewhere else, find a better practice, a better way of doing it," and so on. Basically we are always sort of running headlong, we're never "here." We're never appreciating what we have, because we are looking for better. And the thing about bodhicitta equaling contentment is very interesting. I think it's very interesting, because when your mind is content and happy, it doesn't mean you're stuck there. You keep your training, you know the value of training, but you are happy with what has been achieved so far, you're happy with the discovery that most of the time bodhicitta is your ground. Most of the time it is your foundation, and there is a sense of great satisfaction here. So outside of bodhicitta, really, you don't see anything that would be better than that. You sort of have the best and all the rest pales in comparison. So when you come to this experience, that's really a good sign of spiritual maturity.

The second great quality of mind is, "Great Taming." Taming in the sense of seasoned, trained, disciplined, not imposed from the outside, but something that comes from inside, something in ourself becomes more balanced and tamed.

"Your mind is so tame that you notice the tiniest mistake which creates a negative cause and correct it immediately."

That means that the reflexive bodhicitta, the reflexive discernment kicks in immediately. It's sort of a quasi-permanent state of mindfulness, attentiveness, and carefulness...you notice everything that comes into your mind, or arises from your mind; you notice it. And you know also that a small problem that is ignored becomes a crisis. You know that, so you are not lazy, thinking you'll deal with it later. As it arises, using the practice we have...that is either mind training where we use relative bodhicitta of sending and taking to transmute this outburst of emotion or this problem in your mind, to transmute it into discernment and benevolence, or with the practice of mahamudra vipashyana, using this to look at the nature of this mind, by looking at this emotion that arises and looking into its essence. Whatever techniques we use we not only prevent the spreading of this negative mistake, so it doesn't become a cause for a larger effect, but more than that we transmute it into a virtuous circle, that will create more discernment and more benevolence. So there is a transmutation on the spot that's happening. When you see that, maybe not 24/7, but regularly, more and more often, you can see that you do that, that's a sign of growing spiritual maturity.

The next great quality of mind is patience. Great Patience. Of course. Atisha said, "Without patience there is no virtue possible." We can't achieve anything if we are impatient. You have enormous patience to subdue your negative emotions and defilements. Patience here you could almost say forbearance. You have the courage to look at it even as it comes repeatedly and repeatedly and repeatedly, and it seems like you are always having to get rid of the same things, and it's coming back; there might be a moment when you're disheartened, or discouraged and think you'll never make it. The Tibetans have the wonderful story of the bear who wants to hunt the marmot, we call them woodchucks here, and so anyway the bear comes and he sits next to the hole and then when the marmot comes out then pfft, knocks it out and then takes it and puts it under his butt and then waits for the next one. And he's counting, one down, and as he's leaning forward of course the marmot under the butt wakes up and runs and goes running back to the nest through another gate, and then comes out again. The bear knocks it out again and puts it under his butt. And it just goes on like this. Then the bear is so tired, believing he has like 10 marmot, but when he looks down there is nothing. So when we are dealing with mental afflictions it's a lot like the marmot, like we think we knock one down and there are more and more coming, but no, it's always the same one. It's always the same tendencies, the same habits and so forth.

So don't get tired by trying to suppress them, knock them down, so that they don't come back! Instead, come to know them. Then, out of the marmot example and back to the meditation, look at the emotion...each time you look at it it reveals more and more precisely what the nature of mind is, and then it leads you to discover the innate wisdom of mind. It's not a problem you have to solve anymore. It is an ally, an opportunity to deepen your realization. So naturally you have patience, you don't even need patience actually, because this is great...bring it on! The more marmots, the more realization, so bring it on. That's this kind of patience, it's a patience that comes from understanding the nature of reality and using anything that comes our way to deepen this realization. In this state of mind "You have no reservation whatsoever when it comes to dealing with a negative state of mind."

Yeah, bring it on, whatever comes. That's fine. No problem. Whatever, no need to pick and choose your preference, whatever comes, it's good, I'm gonna work with it. "In other words, you continue to train your mind no matter what." So that also contributes to a sense of contentment, that was described earlier in the Great Minds Qualities as bodhicitta; there is a sense of contentment. This patience is a form of patience we need to find when dealing with things that are not obviously easy, for example in relation to Dharma and practice, that requires sustained effort and attentiveness and so on, and when sometimes we are discouraged and disheartened. But when we understand that it's not just one thing that comes again and again, but rather many opportunities to discover one thing which is the nature of mind, then we have no problem with that. So if we notice this in our mind, we notice that this is how we consider so called problems, this a sign of spiritual maturity.

The next thing is great merit. And here maybe we need to discuss a little bit what merit means. You know, merit is, I'm not sure in English but in French it means like, "This is what I deserve." There's a sense of entitlement in it. Tibetans use the Tibetan word sonam, they translate it as luck. Luck in a sense of having the good conditions. You have the good condition, it's not really because you are smart in this life, but you have the good conditions, the good conditions come from previous accumulation of merit that comes into your life as harmonious, positive causes and conditions that create an appropriate environment and also an appropriate state of mind for you to encounter Dharma, genuine spiritual teachers, and continue your journey towards awakening. So that's luck for the Tibetans, that's one way of saying it.

How do we create this...very simply. Everything you do, say, or think comes from one intention. To benefit others. You are one with the Dharma practice. That's basic. Simple. If any word, thought, or action that you have is aiming at the benefit of everyone, and of course this includes you and others, you are in sync, you are in harmony with the heartbeat of Dharma. So if you notice this in your life, and again, now and then we have outbursts and we are angry and so on, but we are not going to nourish this into resentment. If we don't hold grudges, if we don't maintain resentment; you know, in mind training there is one slogan that says, "Don't act like a worldly person." It's a Tibetan thing in a way, but I guess we have it too. But in Tibet they have the memory of wrongs that were done 5 generations ago, a little bit like in France, the Corsican. They have memories of what was done twenty generations ago...they don't even really remember what happened, but something did! Between my great, great, great, great grandfather and yours, therefore I hate you, and if I can kill you I'll kill you. Keeping track of whoever did wrong, and you hold it.

And then also you keep track of what people did that was good for you, and you also feel sort of indebted forever. Things are really fixed in a moment; that's the worldly attitude. The mind training says, "Don't cultivate this." It's not necessary, move on. Get out of that, just move on. And if you realize that, yes, you can have an outburst, and maybe you have said something, but you are not holding a grudge after that for days or weeks or whatnot. You recognize that maybe he or she is a pain, but if you can be helpful you are happy to do that...that's a sign of spiritual maturity. That's a

sign that your compassion is well deeply ingrained and even if you have an outburst of anger that can be justified or not (that's another story), you don't hold a grudge.

Another slogan of mind training says, "Don't spend your life in ambush." Don't wait for an opportunity to strike back, because all of that is actually harming yourself in the first place. I mean you can spend your entire life holding a grudge against somebody and living in ambush and waiting for the moment when you can strike back, and die before it even happens, and you had a terrible life, while this other guy just didn't even know about it and just had a very happy life. What's the point? It's just self-inflicted pain. "Simultaneously, as you perform your daily practice and affairs, merit is accumulating continuously." Like when you take the bodhisattva vow they say, "Now, even when you sleep you accumulate merit because you have generated the enlightened mind attitude." Basically, your mind is a stream of positivity. With little hiccups now and then, of self-centeredness and little outbursts of anger and so on, no big deal. If the majority of your activity of body, speech, and mind is altruistic then no matter what you do...it doesn't have to be sort of holy, or it's ordinary, it doesn't make a difference, it's all contributing to the enhancement of your realization of the nature of mind and the development of your compassion and your benevolence. So, you don't really have to worry, just mind your mind, and the rest will be taken care of. Mind your mind.

"So, that in turn directly supports your positive activities, generating even more merit." What is that cartoon, Finding Nemo, the little fish? I don't know if you've seen it, but when they enter the Gulf Stream they are just surfing and sliding so fast and so on...it's the same thing here. You enter the positive loop, the positive virtuous circle of compassion, of bodhicitta in general, and just sort of surfing on that. "In this way great merit multiplies automatically." This is how to create a foundation. When we have this, our mind is altruistic. Our mind is aware...we drift, we correct. To begin with, of course, we have to place some effort to do it, but when we notice that actually it's happening by itself, self-correcting and then the merit sort of flows in the virtuous circle, you have a solid ground. That is a plateau of realization that is very important to achieve. When you see that in your stream of mind then it is a source of rejoicing, and also that this is something that is here to stay, it's solid, I can take refuge in this in the sense that I can stand on this, I can build on this...so that's a sign of spiritual maturity. But that is still in the realm of duality, right? Me doing good, me managing my emotions, so it's very much in the world of duality. We need to go beyond that, full enlightenment is beyond duality, right?

That's why we need to see the fifth quality, what Rinpoche calls the Great Yoga of ultimate bodhicitta, take its place. So far we've been talking a lot about relative bodhicitta, which is great, and it's part of the training and creates the foundation, but the transcendence only happens when we cultivate absolute bodhicitta. The Great Yoga is ultimate bodhicitta. "It is the vast and profound mind of wisdom that exposes the nature of reality." So...here we are. You can connect this with ultimate bodhicitta as it is taught in mind training, you can connect this with mahamudra vipashyana as it is taught, for example, as it is taught in Shamar Rinpoche's book *Boundless Wisdom*; this is the same thing. Coming to know the essence of the mind, which is the basis, and manifestation, which is

the expression that arises in and from this basis. Manifestation can be outer manifestation, phenomena, “outer,” and/or “inner” manifestation that is thoughts and sense perceptions and also afflictions. All of this is manifestation, or expression, and the mind that is the source, the basis, the alaya in Sanskrit, the wisdom basis of all this manifestation. So “to possess and sustain this perfect view is thus the quintessential Dharma practice.” You remember from before, if you keep an altruistic mind you’re in sync with the heartbeat of Dharma. If you keep in sync with ultimate bodhicitta this is what quintessential Dharma is. Obviously it’s not one or the other, but these two must merge. These two must merge.

“Through mind training we will achieve these five great qualities of mind, and you have to earnestly train to develop them, as they will not come about by wishful thinking.” There is one slogan in mind training that says, “Your presence is required.” Your effort is required. It’s not like, “Yeah, that’s so cool, let’s wait for it to come.” No, you really have to put your heart and soul, (or no soul;~) in a Buddhist context, into it. Okay? Your participation is required.

And so here I inserted another part of *The Path to Awakening* where Shamar Rinpoche describes yoga...yoga, sometimes we think it’s just asanas and the more modern physical yogas, but “yoga is a complex word with many meanings but within this context (we always have to contextualize when we use words), it is appropriate to examine how the term is used in Tibetan. The Tibetan word for yoga is ‘neldjor.’ One word nel, and one verb, djor(wa). ‘Nel’ is the original awakened nature of mind, we can also call it Dharmakaya, or the nature state, or wisdom alaya, we can also call it madhyamika, or prajnaparamita, in the mahamudra context we can call it ordinary mind...all of these are epithets that are looking from different angles to the natural state of this very mind of ours. Our Buddha nature. That’s what nel means. Djorwa is a verb that means to reach or attain, but it also gives a sense of convergence, it’s attaining through convergence. So neldjor therefore means to reach the original nature of mind. So that’s the yoga, and you know the word yoke in English comes from the Indo-European root, yog, which is also the root for yoga, which means to join two things together, convergence; like we see in a yoke, a piece of wood that holds two oxen together. Here, our mind and the natural state merge, our mind attains, (it’s all relative language, we use the words the best way we can) to attain or to reach the natural state.

If you look at it from the point of view of a beginning, a path, and an end, yes, you attain it, because you started from the basis, and you progressed through the practice of the mahamudra yoga, and then you attain the natural state. Now if you look at it from the point of view of result or fruition, and fruition says that what you have now you already had it in the beginning, so you don’t attain anything that you didn’t have to begin with...but you are not aware of it so when you become aware of it it’s as if you attain something new, but it was not really absent before you realized it. It was just unknown. So that’s why we can sort of finesse around the word attain, or achieve, or neldjor.

“The arising of the five great minds will prove that the essence of the bodhisattva practice has become your nature.” When you see these five great qualities in your mind, as a foundation, as an

underlying strata that's sort of solid, even if you touch and go, you're on and off, you always come back...with some effort, with some practice, or quite naturally, when you see that, this is a sign of great spiritual maturity.

“You will not engage in any negativity no matter how small. You are in control and cannot be swayed by negative emotions.” You may be dragged away for a moment, but then you come back. “For you, all the remedies go into operation automatically, even if you are not paying too much attention.” So it's kind of like a positive automatic pilot, versus before, which was more like a compulsive automatic pilot of kleshas and ignorance, so just totally reversed. “As the remedies are being applied, you remain calm and balanced. Most of your time is naturally spent working for others or for your enlightenment. (Which is also in effect for sentient beings).” What's good for you will eventually be good for others, so working on you, for them, is actually like working for them, because working for them implies you are working on you...otherwise you can't help them. It's all interdependent, right?

“One very important point is this: true compassion is not emotional.” It's not a sort of bleeding heart emotional compassion, and “mature practitioners have a clear view grounded in ultimate bodhicitta.” All of this is an illusion, and I know for you it's very real, and painful, and if I can help you suffer less in your nightmare so that it becomes more like a dream, of course! I'll use all my knowledge of tricks to help you out of this. But eventually you have to wake up. And then if it hurts me to help you in the dream, I'm not going to freak out, because I know I am part of an illusion. So there is no exhaustion, or there is no panic for a self, because the sense of me and fixation of a self as an entity has been relaxed by my understanding of the innate wisdom of mind, by my realization of absolute bodhicitta, so I am fully available to use any possible method in your world of illusion to help you out.

“The seasoned practitioner already knows the nature of suffering itself. Their compassion is influenced by wisdom so there is no sadness or emotion involved.” It's not that they are cold, you see, or distant. You can actually really feel their pain and at the same time know that it is self-inflicted out of ignorance and delusion. And so that because your empathy doesn't drag you down and make you drown with them, you can really be helpful. If you go and see a therapist and then the therapist breaks down and cries when he hears your problem, what's the point of spending so much money? You need somebody who has a different perspective and that's what you gain through your realization of ultimate bodhicitta. “Unhampered and free of emotions, bodhisattvas help others in a sensible and appropriate way.”

So on that and the yoga part, I wanted to take a little direction towards what we call the Guru Yoga, because we have the word yoga...and I'd like to connect this practice of the Guru Yoga with we've seen and how the yoga is sort of a constant state of union with the natural state of mind. And how this is cultivated through the practice of Guru Yoga. Guru Yoga in the Kagyu tradition is very important. It's one important way to come into contact with the nature of our mind without being overly mentally constructing concepts, words, ideas about this, but just surrendering into admiration.

Something happens that you meet your mind. And in particular in the mahamudra tradition there is what we call the preliminary practice. So preliminary to what? To this djorwa, where your mind merges with the natural state...which happens, for example, through the practice of mahamudra vipashyana.

This djorwa, this convergence of your mind and the natural state will happen through this practice. The preliminary practices will simply prepare the ground. They will make it easier for this to happen.

It's like you have to have a very deep conversation, a heart-to-heart, with a dear friend. But you are in the middle of chaos, your house is falling apart, people are running around, there is nowhere to sit...this is kind of like my nightmare. I need to have a very serious heart-to-heart conversation, but everything around is such a mess. And so I have to really use all my attention to stay focused on the conversation, but there is a lot of loss of presence because there are so many things going on. So, we need to clarify. For example, in a conversation with somebody, you say, "Let's find a little place where we can be quiet. Just the two of us, so we can be free from distraction." That's the idea of the preliminary practices. We free ourselves from a lot of things. But it's not the point today for me to go into the details of the different phases of the preliminaries, the refuge, the Vajrasattva, mandala practices and all of that, but i just want to touch a little bit, to briefly touch the Guru Yoga.

So you prepared the ground so that the room is clear, and then here you are with your friend, Buddha. Just try to be open to his presence and then somewhat in this surrender/admiration, devotion, to come to realize slowly that actually your mind and the natural state are not different...in essence. Despite "what I always thought." Me being an ordinary being and you being the Buddha, great and wonderful. We are so different. No! In essence all phenomena partake from the same innate wisdom of the natural state. There is no difference. In essence. In manifestation, yes. But manifestation is an illusion, and this illusion can be a platform for awakening, we can use this illusion to realize what is the natural state and how it is the very essence of our mind. The Guru Yoga plays on that. If you are not mature when you engage in the Guru Yoga practice, you might succumb to what psychologists call transference...you transfer your desire onto an ideal. A teacher, a being, a concept, whatever, a divinity...and you try to receive from this. You consider yourself as depleted, and this brings a fullness that you want to get from this being; therefore you seduce, you want to please...this is called co-dependence. And unfortunately I've seen this happen way too often, where immature students and indelicate teachers dance the dance of codependency, and that only brings suffering.

So we need to be really mature. We need to really relate to the guru as the embodiment, the presence, of the Buddha nature. Period. With all his qualities and all his radiance and so on, and becoming aware of these qualities in somebody else will help us to realize our own qualities within ourselves that maybe for unknown reasons we are unable to see in ourselves. And also because there is some, I don't even have a word for that, but some magic happening when the two meet. When there is a mind to mind encounter. When there is the yoga, the djorwa, the connection of the two, there is some experience that whoever had that experience will say, "I'm at a loss for words, there

are no words to describe it.” So they will say, like, ”It was a magical moment, something transformed my life and my vision of the world.” So this is what the Guru Yoga practice is aiming at. Yoga we’ve seen, this is the reaching, converging of your mind and the natural state.

Now guru, what is guru? In Sanskrit guru literally means intense. Heavy...like oozing qualities. In a way you can say intense because it’s not time to fool around, it’s a serious moment. A person with gravitas. Like when you met Shamar Rinpoche, it could be very relaxed and very casual but if you were foolish you would get the feedback very quickly. You’re not here to mess around. As I often tell people, “Always remember Rinpoche is your Buddha, not your buddy.” You have to really engage in this relationship. Not with a heavy heart, or very serious, because this is a waste of time and would have to be overcome, but also no foolishness. Because the guru is heavy, intense, someone with gravitas, because you are dealing with the real thing here. It’s a matter of liberation or death here; if you have one minute with a liberator, don’t waste your time pretending or being childish or whatever...that’s ridiculous.

So in the moment where we invoke the presence of the guru, and that could be, if you had the privilege to meet a person, a human being who embodies this, then okay, they will take the traits of say, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche or Gyalwa Karmapa or whoever. People who you could really sense, even if you don’t know what it is, have really some enlightenment qualities. So when you have had the chance to have had this, that’s a great privilege, so use this, invoke them, be in their presence again as you have done in the past. Let it open up your heart and use these six verses if you want, that we find in the Guru Yoga, to help you to do that. In the traditional way that we use this text by the 9th Karmapa, but there are many others, we repeat this 100,000 times.

#### Guru Yoga Six Verses

Gyalwa Karmapa IX

I supplicate the precious Lama,

Bestow your blessing to abandon self-grasping.

Bestow your blessing to be continuously free from wants and desires.

Bestow your blessing to stop doubts, and mistrust in the dharma.

Bestow your blessing that I realize the mind to be beyond birth, cessation and dwelling.

Bestow your blessing that confusions are pacified into themselves.

Bestow your blessing that existence is realized to be dharmakaya.

In Tibetan it translates as, “I pray for you to grant waves of grace, please grant your waves of generosity,” which is sort of like a call to, or reminds you of (it works both ways) to the nature of mind, which is radiant. Mind is empty, but also creative, in the sense that the nature of reality is self-

exposing. It exposes its own truth all the time of being empty and creative, empty and aware. So this is the dynamic, these are the waves of the ultimate state of the Dharmakaya, it's called the Sambhogakaya in Sanskrit, the mode of manifestation of all the enjoyment, all the qualities, all the wealth of this Dharmakaya. So that's what we are calling...we are calling for the waves of the Sambhogakaya, the waves of grace, to come and help us to get rid of the first and main obstacle, which is self-fixation. The self is a bundle of aggregates that work for certain functions, not more or less than that. But we superimpose onto that the idea of somebody, something, an entity, "me" and that just complicates everything. And so we have to promote and we have to protect this me and so on...so let's get over this, please help me, send me the wave of grace. Because with the wave of grace when I open, the self-fixation dissolves. It's like when you have a stain and you use some white spirits or other solvent, you can't have both. The waves of grace dissolve self-fixation, so please, let's start with this. Please, help me to be a little bit more fluid, to see that "self" is just skandhas, okay, functional, but this business of adding to it a designation or turning it into an entity...let's dissolve this.

"Grant your blessing to be continuously free from wants and desires." Gendun Rinpoche was always reminding us and asking us to turn our gaze inward. Like, "Don't look outside, look inside, look inside, look inside, look inside." Because if you look inside you'll find the source of contentment, which is bodhicitta, which is the realization of the true nature of mind. If you are not looking inside then you believe that this contentment comes from outer objects, and then you are just throwing yourself into a wild goose chase. Very, very disappointing because these outer objects are very, very illusive, and as the outer objects they have their life, a certain lifespan, and then they die. So even if we achieve them they just disappear and we are left with regrets, nostalgia, and that becomes an incentive to run for another object. So there is nowhere to be found out there, this is one point of Gendun Rinpoche, don't go outside to look for the elephant, it's "in the house." Look into your mind. And so when you decide to look into your mind, you have everything. What do you need, what are you missing? So all the other distractions and outer objects are seen as futile and unnecessary and sometimes becoming the cause for a lot of complications and misery. So that's the second thing that will happen when we relax self-fixation and we turn our gaze inward looking for the mind, looking at the mind, and nothing else really matters at this point, nothing else is more important than this.

"Grant your blessing to stop doubts and mistrust in the Dharma." Basically anything that has nothing to do with reality. And doubts and mistrust...doubt is when you are playing with your hope and your fears and you don't know where to go. Please, help me free myself from doubts and expectations. And mistrust in the Dharma often comes from also thinking that it doesn't work, and therefore Dharma is not good, or it doesn't work and therefore I am not good. So sometimes we mistrust ourselves, and sometimes we mistrust the Dharma...just because we don't have the patience to keep doing what has to be done. We become impatient, and as we're impatient we have to get rid of whatever is holding us back. And if you're an introvert you'll think that it's you, and if you're an extrovert you'll think it's the Dharma. In the experience of contentment that comes from

the waves of blessing is that all the doubts are seen as unnecessary agitation, all the mistrust is unnecessary agitation, and you just let go. You don't have to even really suppress or resolve, you just let it be. It just arises. You know, when the sun hits the cold earth, steam comes. Doubt and mistrust, that's part of the process. Just keep going, don't panic, keep going.

“Bestow your blessing that I realize the mind to be beyond birth, cessation, and dwelling.” So now we are coming to an important step. The first three are preparing the ground. The first is relaxing self-fixation. Turning our gaze inside and being quite happy with what we are actually doing and have very little desire for anything else...as if there will be something fantastic and much better. And then we are okay to work with the fog that arises as a result of our practice, that maybe appears as doubt and mistrust. So we've prepared the ground. And now we really enter the part of mahamudra vipashyana where we are looking at the nature of mind and that's why we ask please, I need now this wave of inspiration and blessing so that I can realize the mind to be unborn. That means beyond birth, cessation, and dwelling. Mind being unborn because it's not an entity. Mind being unborn because its essence is emptiness. But at the same time it is empty yet indissociable from awareness. Grant me your blessing so that I can realize the innate wisdom of mind which is the union of emptiness and awareness. So that's what we are calling. We are calling the waves of grace that dispels that which prevents me from seeing the nature of my mind. It's not that it gives me something that I did not have, it's just that this blessing is just helping dissolve what makes a difference; the veil.

“Grant your blessing that confusions (delusions) are pacified into themselves.” Pacified into themselves...we are totally into the mahamudra vipashyana practice. When we look at distraction, and if we look not at the story of why we are distracted and about what, the delusion or whatever, but we look directly at what is the stuff this delusion is made of? We come to see that in essence it is indissociable from the mind whose innate wisdom is the union of emptiness and awareness. And so it appears as delusion, but it is Dharmakaya. So thoughts are Dharmakaya, so that's the blessing we ask for, we ask for the blessing to see this in our mind, and that whatever obscures this may be dispelled. And 'pacify into themselves', because even delusion is mind. So in the mahamudra vipashyana delusion, which we could say is a mental affliction, a poison, is actually mind itself, so delusion is Dharmakaya...thoughts are Dharmakaya, concepts are Dharmakaya, mental afflictions are Dharmakaya. If we come to this realization there is nothing to achieve and there is nothing to purify. There is nothing to enhance, and nothing to subtract. That's sort of the definition of mahamudra, there's nothing beyond and there is nothing that needs to be adjusted for being impure or not part of it. It's becoming more and more refined, our experience of mind, so that everything, whatever comes, sensory stimulations that come through the gateways of our senses, concepts, conceptual thinking, kleshas, delusion, all of this immediately allows us to reconnect with the innate wisdom of mind. And therefore, this that could have been a problem is dissolved and liberated in its own place, which is mind...by itself.

“Grant your blessing so that existence is realized to be Dharmakaya.” That's the final touch, that's enlightenment. Like, grant your blessing so I can see that samsara and nirvana are in essence

indissociable. In manifestation they are different, the way samsara appears is qualified by suffering and comes from ignorance, mind not knowing itself. Nirvana is qualified with cessation of suffering, ease, bliss, and coming from the wisdom of mind...mind knowing itself. But it's all about mind. The underlying reality is the Dharmakaya, this has never changed, whether it is samsara or nirvana; just in the appearance in the manifestation it appears different, in essence they are indissociable. So that's the final touch, what we request. But to nail it, that will be the enlightenment...when you realize these two to be indissociable.

And so to conclude on this, I read somewhere, and I don't remember who said it but I think it doesn't really matter, the line is: "To contemplate your mind is an act of devotion." So, the guru is your mind. To contemplate your mind through the guru, the Buddha, Milarepa, the lama you met who is inspiring you again and again and opens treasures of realizations in your mind, contemplating your mind through this mirror, in a way, is an act of devotion. So that's what really truly devotion is...it's not worshipping a being from a position of being weak, depleted, admiring a superior being that is different from me and maybe I can grab some little goodies if I'm a nice boy or nice girl. That's not what devotion is about. Devotion is about contemplating your own mind, and being in awe, like, "Wow!" Wow, thank you Buddha for showing me the way in the first place. Thank you.