

Tathagata. This method of purification of body, mind, and speech forms the entire basis of all Tantric practices.

Armor Protection is found only in Tantrayana and not in Sutrayana practices. There are many kinds of Armor Protection methods. For example, I have already taught you the Dream Mahamudra. In that particular method, one practices this skill of protection before one falls asleep: one assumes the Lion Posture, chants a mantra, and visualizes the Root Guru or Personal Deity appearing to emit light on one; then, from one's throat a red light is emitted and transformed into a red tent over oneself, providing a sacred space for Clear Light meditation during the sleep state. This is a protective force of the Dream Mahamudra.

During meditation practices, one performs the mudra, mantra, and visualizes the Dharma Protector to keep guard around one in each of the four directions, protecting one throughout the practice. When one forms the mudra correctly, chants the mantra well, and enters deeply into the visualization, one definitely receives protection from the Dharma Protectors.

Other Circumstances When Armor Protection Is Needed

There are also other circumstances when there is a need to perform the Armor Protection. Meditation is not the only situation where there is a possibility of subtle interfering forces. For example, one has to exercise caution when one visits a hospital. Many patients in the hospital have "attached spirits". Why are these patients sick? Many of the illnesses are caused by attached spirits and ghosts. When one visits patients in the hospital, one should first perform the Armor Protection. Otherwise, it is possible that some of these attached spirits might follow one home and become one's own attached spirits. Then it will take some effort to have these attached spirits delivered through a Deliverance Ceremony. Therefore, before visiting a hospital, one should perform the Armor Protection.

Slaughterhouses also have many angry spirits. Why? Because these are places where many lives are taken and many embittered spirits are engendered. Therefore, one needs to perform the Armor Protection before visiting slaughterhouses; otherwise, there will be many harassment when one becomes entangled by a rancorous spirit.

Before visiting a cinema, one should perform the Armor Protection. Why are there ghosts inside cinemas? [audience laughter] One might not know that many roaming ghosts like to converge inside cinemas. Therefore, there is a need to perform the Armor Protection.

Weddings and funerals also require the Armor Protection. When one gets married, one's ancestor spirits come to participate and celebrate as they care very much about such major events in the lives of their descendants. When one dies, the spirits come to have a party to welcome one's birth into their world. Therefore, it is necessary to perform the Armor Protection in both these circumstances.

It is best not to visit any places where pornography or sex is sold. If one does go to such a place, one should perform the Armor Protection. [audience laughter] What kind of ghost is most populous there? The lust ghosts! [audience laughter] One might have a Pure Dharma Body [audience laughter] but, when a lust ghost attaches itself to one, one's thoughts will have a difficult time remaining unperturbed. One falls down when one's mind is tainted with lust. Because of the presence of lust ghosts in such places, one has to perform the Armor Protection.

In general, when one visits such places, in addition to performing the Armor Protection, one sometimes also needs to recite the Hundred Syllable Mantra. When one chants the Hundred Syllable Mantra in the vicinity of these places, it brings great benefits to oneself as well as to other sentient beings, including the spirits.

Therefore there are several circumstances when the Armor Protection has to be performed. A student has asked me if I could teach a special method as a substitute for the

Dream Mahamudra. He says that the Dream Mahamudra, which is equivalent to the Armor Protection, is too long. He is usually quite fatigued when he goes to bed, and so he falls asleep half way through the Dream Mahamudra. [audience laughter] He works very hard during the day and, by the time he goes to bed, he is bone-tired and yet still has to practice the Dream Mahamudra! Why does the True Buddha Tantric Dharma have to be so tiresome! [audience laughter] Sleptime is sleeptime, why be bothered with the Dream Mahamudra!

One might not be aware of this but, during the state of sleep, it is most difficult for one to remain mindful. I can assure you that I am continuously in the state of mindfulness during the nighttime as well as the daytime; but can you assure that for yourself? Even if one is capable of uninterrupted mindfulness during the day, one might not be able to maintain such a presence at night. In order to be mindful during sleep, one must have some protective force guarding one. If demons come to steal one's chi or vital energy during sleep, then the longer one sleeps, the more tired one becomes. One might wonder why one is lucid and capable of noble and lofty discussions with others during the daytime but, as soon as one falls asleep, one is overtaken by confusion and chaos. One racks one's brain wondering why, but the same situation recurs each night. Such a condition indeed exists, which is why nighttime is when it is easiest to lose one's mind.

There is a simple way to do the Armor Protection and today I will teach you this Dharma Treasure. [audience applause] In contemporary society, people prefer something that is simple and easy over anything that is too long and cumbersome.

Protection Power of The Vajra

When one is lying in bed, regardless of one's sleeping posture, first visualize one's two big toes joined together and extending out until they are very long. Then visualize the area at the top of the crown also start to protrude and become long

and extended. Doesn't it seem to turn one into a kind of unicorn? Well, let's not worry about it. Next the kneecaps start to transform into the five prongs of a vajra, and the area between the kneecaps and the neck becomes the mid-section of a vajra, while one's head becomes another set of five prongs. What has one become? One has become a vajra. The five prongs knot at each end tapers out to a point, while the body transforms into the mid-section of a vajra. After such visualization, one chants the tri-syllable mantra, "Lang, Yang, Kang." One chants this twenty-one times, or forty-nine times, or one hundred eight times, or until one falls asleep.

One's visualization has to be very clear before one chants the mantra, then what is sleeping on the bed will be a vajra. When the demons come and take a look, all they see is a sacred weapon that can destroy them! [audience laughter] They leave one alone because one has chanted the tri-syllable mantra. The final syllable "Kang" means strong and sturdy. By chanting the tri-syllable mantra repeatedly, one becomes strong and sturdy, and transformed into a vajra lying there on the bed. The demons would not have the nerve to assault one. This is the simplest and easiest way of protection.

An additional benefit of doing this practice is that one's life-span will be lengthened. So this is a very good method in developing strength and longevity.

Other Applications of Armor Protection

We have to learn to apply the Armor Protection in our daily lives. One of these applications is to chant seven times the mantra, "Om bo ru lan ze lee," while holding the clothes one is to put on and visualizing them transforming into armor. Chant another seven times the mantra "Om bo ru lan ze lee" while holding one's hat and transform it into a warrior's helmet. The clothes become body armor and the hat becomes a steel helmet. This is the way to practice Armor Protection.

One has to learn diverse uses of the Armor Protection due to the power of demonic forces. When one performs the

Armor Protection and has the vajra gods guarding over one, cultivation will be free of negative interference. Every spiritual cultivator requires such inner protection.

One can visualize the vajra as golden in color.

“Lang, Yang, Kang.” All of you here today who have heard this method can practice it when you go home. You will generate a kind of power. When you repose at night as a vajra, negative forces will leave you alone. This is the most effective method of protection.

Today I have discussed three liturgical steps: the Mandala Offering, Fourfold Refuge, and Armor Protection. Actually there are numerous alternative forms of Armor Protection methods, such as the Four Animal Spirits Armor Protection mentioned in one of my books, but this Vajrasattva Armor Protection is sufficient. When one performs, in addition, the Vajra Transformation at night, I believe one can become very firm and strong and will be able to attain very high spiritual power.

Om Mani Padme Hum.

*Third Day:
November 26, 1992*

Introduction

Fellow cultivators, masters, good afternoon.

Today is the third day of this Complete and Detailed Exposition on the Liturgy of the Basic True Buddha Tantric Dharma. Before I start, I would like to emphasize again the importance of Tantric cultivation and also to communicate to you a few important realizations I, myself, have attained in the process of learning and practicing the Tantric Dharma.

Authentic Experiences

Most of you know that, when I was twenty-six years old, I went to visit the Jade Emperor Temple in Taiwan and that it was there that the Golden Mother of the Jade Pond opened the Divine Eyesight for me. Then, that same night, I was brought to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds in the Western Paradise of Ultimate Bliss [Sukhavati]. I know that this kind of experience is extremely rare, though not unheard of. My experience was so real that, although it happened when I was twenty-six, it still leaps absolutely vividly before my eyes. I saw the Padmakumara [Lotus Bodhisattva] and the white, lightning-like light radiated by him. Every single lotus blossom was as big as an automobile tire. What I saw at the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds corresponded exactly to the Amitabha Sutra's descriptions of Sukhavati. This true experience later became a kind of spiritual backup force, sustaining me in my pursuit of Taoism and Buddhism.

Until that experience, I did not know who Padmakumara was. Before the age of twenty-six, I had never even heard of Padmakumara. It was from that night on that I came to know of his existence. He told me himself that his name was "Lian Hua Tung Tzu" [Padmakumara]. Such an experience is extremely rare in this world. I have often emphasized and repeated this truth: I have been to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds of the Sukhavati. I hope that this knowledge will give you a

strong and firm faith, just as it has given me a strong and firm faith. With this strong faith, an initiated True Buddha School student can practice the Dharma and arrive at the goal and attain realization. Therefore this faith is extremely important.

Three Solemn Oaths

I have often thought about making an oath to attest to the truth of my visit to Sukhavati. But, on further thought, what would such an oath accomplish if people take me to be a liar? Although I am sincere and honest when I tell everyone that I have been to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds in Sukhavati, the believers will believe and the nonbelievers will still disbelieve. This is the way it is because faith is based on many causes and conditions.

Today I am going to make an oath to all of you. I have never before made an oath. Whenever I was about to make an oath, I always stopped short of actually making it.

Here is my oath: If my traveling at the age of twenty-six to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds in Sukhavati and my encounter with Padmakumara did not happen, and, if the whole incident was a total fabrication, I am willing to descend to the Vajra Hell and remain there eternally!

I was reluctant to make such an oath before as I realized that even pledging an oath is sometimes useless. Some people will, upon hearing this oath, say it is false! Such an oath just does not do anything for them at all!

Before the Heavens, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all Deities, I make this pledge: if what I saw and heard that particular night when I was twenty-six years old was fabricated by me, I am willing to be banished forever to the Vajra Hell.

This is a very solemn oath. To remain in the Vajra Hell is to be always in darkness, with no chance of rebirth to the realm of humans. This is a very severe oath, and I make it in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Now, I would like to bring up the incident this year in Taiwan when I met Buddha Shakyamuni and had coffee with

him. Many people found this strange. They said in disbelief, "Sheng-yen Lu is getting too ridiculous, having coffee with Buddha Shakyamuni!"

So, did Buddha Shakyamuni write for me on a piece of paper, the epithet "Flower Light Self-Mastery Buddha"? Let me tell you, he didn't. [audience laughter]

What do I mean by that? At the beginning, Buddha Shakyamuni actually wrote "Great Light Self-Mastery Buddha" on a piece of paper and then showed it to me. I did not like the word "Great," so I said to the Buddha, "I don't like the word Great and don't want to be known as the Great Master; I would rather be called the Little Master. Instead, why don't you give me the name 'Little Light Self-Mastery Buddha'?" [audience laughter] Little Light Master would then become the Rev. Hsiao Kuang.¹ [audience laughter] I asked Buddha Shakyamuni not to use "Great" Light, as I preferred to be called "Little." Subsequently, Buddha Shakyamuni changed the word Great into Flower and that was how it became the Flower Light Self-Mastery Buddha. This is the truth. I clearly watched while he changed the word. Buddha Shakyamuni was wearing a western suit at the time.

If this incident of how I saw Buddha Shakyamuni writing the epithet "Great Light Self-Mastery Buddha," followed by my request for the change and his subsequent changing of the word "Great" into "Flower," is all a fabrication of mine and, if I have not actually seen and heard this entire sequence of events, I am willing to descend to the Vajra Hell and remain there eternally, with no hope of leaving.

In front of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Tathagatas, Dharma Protectors, and all Deities, I pledge this, my second solemn oath.

Today I am making three solemn oaths, and the third solemn oath has to do with the sensations and perceptions I

¹ "Little Light" in Mandarin sounds the same as Hsiao Kuang, the name of the Buddhist monk who is the housekeeper at Rainbow Villa.

experience in my practices. As do many of you, I practice the True Buddha Tantric Dharma on a daily basis. I have been practicing for more than twenty years without skipping a day. Of course, many students have also been practicing for many years. Some have experienced mystical experiences, while others have not. Some have achieved yogic responses [union with the meditating Deity], while others have not.

In regard to my own experiences: when I was living in Ballard, a suburb north of Seattle, my awareness and perceptions varied each time I did the practice. Sometimes there were very good responses and sometimes there was no response. Sometimes the sensations were very strong but sometimes they were very subtle. During that time I experienced a whole range of sensations during my meditations. However, in recent years my experiences at the True Buddha Tantric Quarter have been quite different. Now how does it feel each time I do the practice? During each practice, I can feel my whole body being enveloped by a swirl of chi, and outside the chi is light. In between the chi and light is fire. That is, there is a swirl of chi surrounding my body and outside this chi is fire and, beyond the fire, is light. My whole body is held and supported at the upper portion of the Empty Space. These are very strong and tactile sensations. I can feel the layer of enveloping chi which, unlike the sensation of wind blowing against one, is like coming into contact with electricity or being surrounded by something that is substantial and firm. These sensations are very strong and are clearly perceived each time I do the practice.

I do not know what kind of awareness and perceptions you experience when you do the practice, and I cannot pledge for you. Therefore, I can only make this pledge: every time I do the practice, I am completely surrounded by chi, fire, and light. This kind of sensation of mutual merging is strong and extremely vivid. If these sensations that I have described do not happen, if I have made them up, I shall go to the Vajra Hell without any chance of liberation.

Three Intentions

The main reason behind my pledging these three solemn oaths is that I wish that each of you will be able to experience the same strong and clear perceptions that I do, each time you do the practice. I also wish that you can personally travel to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds in Sukhavati. Furthermore, I wish that you are able to meet with the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas face to face, to pray to them to bless and empower you to become a Buddha in the future.

I hope I have made myself very clear. I hope every one of you who has not been to Sukhavati can travel between here and there. This is my first intention. Second, I hope your cultivation will result in the prophecy of Buddhahood by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Third, each time you practice, I hope you can obtain a very strong, clear, and profound kind of awareness and perception. If all these three intentions are met, you definitely will not turn away from your initial resolution to do cultivation, nor will you give up the path of cultivation. One will continue practicing the True Buddha Tantric Dharma with determination and perseverance. And subsequently one will reach the fruit of Buddhahood and be able to help bring liberation to more sentient beings.

Grief Before and After Realization

The path of cultivation is not an easy one to tread, but it is a pity if man chooses not to tread on it. Before I attained realization, I labored and grieved with my utmost effort, in soaking sweat and tears, to try to reach the goal. Now that I have attained realization, I still grieve and labor in sweat and tears. Why? I am not grieving or laboring for myself. Although I am awakened and have attained realization and understanding, it is heartrending to look at the world and see so many sentient beings still in ignorance. Before Enlightenment, I was broken-hearted; after Enlightenment, I am even more broken-hearted. This is because I grieve for the people of the world

who are not able to understand the benefits and importance of doing spiritual cultivation. Why can't they appreciate the greatness and wonder of this transcendent Dharma that will enable one to become completely One with the Universe?

That is why, before realization, I wept in grief and why, after realization, I still weep in grief. But, today, all of you were able to come here to listen to the Dharma that I am teaching, it is an indication of the extraordinarily strong affinity you have with the Buddhas. Therefore, you should cherish this Dharma. After learning how to do the practice, you should practice it with perseverance. I have practiced this Dharma for more than twenty years and, if this Dharma is false, wouldn't I have been cheating myself for more than two decades? By following this path that I already have trodden, one can also attain the same realization that I have attained, and there will come a time when the Buddhas will appear to prophesy one's Buddhahood. One will then attain Self-Mastery, Great Perfection, and Luminosity. These accomplishments greatly surpass all the wealth, fame, prestige, and relationships of the world.

Things of the World Always Return to Dust

What is familial comfort and conjugal happiness? They are but dust and dirt in the eyes of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The greatest mansion in this world is still dust and dirt; the greatest fame in this world is still dust and dirt. The greatest accumulation of wealth in this world is still dust and dirt; conjugal bliss and love is still dust and dirt. Only when one practices and reaches transcendence in the realm of Self-Mastery, Perfection, and Light, will the genuine and supreme Wisdom of Buddhahood be manifest.

Therefore I hope that, in our school, more students will completely devote their hearts to walk this path of cultivation. The more the better. Now, many people have made the decision to become renunciants [monks and nuns] and to pursue this goal single-mindedly. They deserve our commendation because such resolution and determination to liberate oneself

from samsara and to generate the Bodhicitta is most rare and noble. If one is unable at this time to become a renunciant, due to worldly entanglements, it is all right as long as one bears in mind that, when the time comes for one to break with worldly affairs, one must let go. After all, that which is of the world belongs to the world and must return to dust. Dust is always dust. There is a saying: the spirit returns to the spirit, the earth returns to the earth. Everything in the world always returns to dust. Only the mind and spirit are transcendent. Therefore there is really no alternative to this path of cultivation; it is just that people of the world do not understand and are oblivious to this truth. We first have to awaken ourselves and then work earnestly to liberate other sentient beings. This completes my introductory words to the third day's teachings.

The Four Immeasurable Vows

Now I shall continue with the Complete and Detailed Exposition of the Liturgy of the True Buddha Tantric Dharma. What I discussed during the first two days is considered the Prologue Section, and today I will begin the Main Body. The Prologue Section consists of the Purification Mantras, Invocation, Great Homage, Mandala Offering, Fourfold Refuge, and Armor Protection. Actually, in our True Buddha Tantric Dharma, one more step, the Four Immeasurable Vows, may also be included. The Four Immeasurable Vows also are extremely important. One's mind will have achieved greatness when one can truly understand the meaning of the Four Immeasurable Vows. The Four Immeasurable Vows are Benevolence, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity.

Benevolence is to give happiness to sentient beings. Compassion is to uproot the sufferings of sentient beings. Joy is to carry out Benevolence and Compassion with infinite joy. Equanimity is to be able to sacrifice the self or enter into the state of No-self when practicing Benevolence, Compassion, and Joy.

When one is able to enact the Four Immeasurable Vows, one becomes a saint. When one practices the Four Immeasurable Vows, one's heart becomes infinitely large. If everyone's heart becomes infinitely large, the world will become the ideal and perfect society propounded by Confucius.

However, people in the world do not practice Benevolence, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity. What do they practice instead? They want happiness for themselves but misery for others. They feel unhappy and out of sorts when they see other people doing good deeds. They become resentful when they observe other people renouncing the egotistic self. Sentient beings can be mean, narrow-minded, and petty. Therefore, it is very important to learn to practice the Four Immeasurable Vows: to give happiness to sentient beings and to uproot their sufferings, to carry out these deeds in infinite joy, and in a state of No-self.

The Body Offering Practice

There was a famous Tibetan yogini, the Honorable Machig Labdrönme, who was a female guru who popularized the Body Offering Practice [Chöd]. How is this practice of No-self done?

One visualizes one's two eyes transform into the sun and moon, one's skin transform into the land, one's bones and flesh transform into mountains and earth; blood becomes bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, and oceans, one's breathing becomes the wind, and one's hair becomes the trees. The Honorable Machig Labdrönme used this visualization to dissect and give away all of herself. This is the gist of the Body Offering Visualization established by the Honorable Machig Labdrönme. When one completely sacrifices all of one's body to give to sentient beings to use, the self is transcended, and one becomes No-Self. If one is unable to give and make sacrifices, then one still has greed.

Transcending the Self is No Simple Matter

It is easy to speak of "No-Self," but achieving it is no simple matter. For example, one comes to the Rainbow Villa to listen to these seven days of Dharma teachings and, since one sometimes has to make an offering, one divides all the money one has brought along into seven portions. One portion for each day, so there are seven portions.

Well, on second thought, it won't do! How is one going to survive without any money? One then sets aside half of the money, as there is the hotel bill to pay and one has to have some bread and eggs for breakfast. As for lunches and suppers, one may count on the Ling Shen Ching Tze Temple, as meals are served there at noon and in the evening. Nonetheless, sometimes one needs to go to Costco, or Sears, or some other department store to buy some necessary items. When one sees something good in the store, one wants to purchase it. Some students from Taiwan might even want to buy a toaster

oven to bring back home. So one needs to reserve some money for oneself. Say there is originally one thousand dollars. After setting aside the seven portions for offerings, there is only three hundred dollars left.

Well, on further thought, how about reserving nine hundred dollars for personal use [audience laughter] and using one hundred dollars for the offerings? After putting ten dollars into each red envelope, one still has thirty dollars left over for evening snacks. As one computes the figures, one can't help feeling that this is just wonderful! [audience laughter]

As a matter of fact, it is appropriate for students to have such considerations. When one travels, one has to pay for taxi cabs or other transportation, and one also has to buy this and that. I would feel disconcerted if one emptied all one's pockets for me. [laughter] Apart from making offerings to the Grand Master, one should also make offerings to other people. For example, when one has the opportunity to do good or meaningful deeds that are beneficial to other people, one should make a commitment to do them. As a result of making such offerings, good karmic relationships will be generated between oneself and others. Good results will soon generate from the seeds of such good actions.

The Benefits of Donating Meals

It is very popular now for people to offer to pay for meals at temples. For example, one goes to visit a certain temple and suddenly someone there offers to pay for the total food cost for that evening's meal. Whoever eats that meal becomes the receiver while the person making the offering is the giver. The act of giving should be done without expecting anything in return. One should not say, "Well, all of you have accepted my food, and you will have to pay me back in the future." One should not have this kind of thought. However, such an act does create a positive karmic affinity between the giver and the receivers. Today one accepts a meal that costs ten dollars, how much karmic interest might this ten dollars generate in

one's next life, which might be sixty, seventy, eighty, a hundred, or even a hundred and twenty years from now? When the giver and receiver meet again in their next human life, the receiver will definitely be well disposed towards the giver because of the acceptance of that one meal in their previous lives! [audience laughter] In the next life, the giver might become a woman and the receiver might turn out to be a man, and when they meet, the man will have a favorable impression of the woman and will want to marry her and pay her back. [audience laughter] So, no matter how often the wife pinches him, smacks him, or scolds him, this husband will still find the wife very dear and will obey her orders. [audience laughter] Because of that one meal, he is paying back the debt to her! [audience laughter] This boss for whom one works perhaps accepted one's offer of a meal in a previous life, so in this life he might find one very pleasing to the eye and, out of the blue, decide to give one a raise. Why? Because he is paying back a debt for a meal from the last life.

Or say one is appearing in court and is extremely nervous, as one has been found guilty. The judge who is writing the sentence takes a look and finds one surprisingly familiar because the judge has accepted a meal from one in his or her previous life. Therefore this judge decides to give one a lighter sentence. Perhaps in lieu of imprisonment, one only needs to pay a fine. There are many benefits in treating others to meals. In the next life, the receiver might have such a favorable impression of the giver that the former will lend or give anything to the latter and become his or her benefactor. One can count and see how many benefactors one will have in the next life. Good affinity is formed each time one donates food to other sentient beings and, in turn, one will be well received by the others the next time around.

The American singer, Michael Jackson, definitely donated many meals in his previous life! [audience laughter] When people see him, they all become crazy and, for all his events, want to buy tickets to hear him sing. He is able to attract many sentient beings in this life because all these people

have accepted a meal from him in a previous life. An affinity has been formed, and all these people are paying him back. By donating meals and making sacrifices, many good karmic ties are formed which will blossom in the future, bringing one friendship, wealth, assistance, the Buddhadharma, good knowledge, and enlightened teachers.

No-self Giving and the Jataka Tales

I am using food offering as just one example of giving. There are countless other methods of giving. If the giving comes from the heart, then one eventually will reach the highest level of "No-Self giving." "No-Self giving" leads to Buddhahood. Recorded in the Jataka sutras are stories of the Buddha's previous incarnations. Giving is the theme of all these stories. Slicing one's own flesh to feed the vulture and offering one's own body to feed the tiger are examples of giving [sacrifices]. The many stories of deer kings and elephant kings in the Jataka sutras are also about giving. Does everyone know this? From these stories, one can understand that a mind that is filled with Benevolence, Compassion, Joy, and Equanimity [the basis of self-sacrifice] is very great and can lead to Buddhahood. Enlightenment is attained when the state of true "No-Self giving" and the state of "No-Self" is reached. Therefore the Four Immeasurable Vows are very great vows.

The High King Avalokitesvara Sutra and Rebirth Mantra

The seventh step of the Liturgy is the recitation of the High King Avalokitesvara Sutra. [Grand Master Lu rings the bell.] Why was this sutra selected? It was selected because this was the first Buddhist sutra I came upon in this life, although it was already in existence during the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It is a sutra of great mystical powers although it comprises only the names of Buddhas. I was specifically drawn to this sentence in the sutra: "By constantly invoking this sutra, one is liberated from the suffering of birth and death, and freed from all the many kinds of suffering." As soon as I read this sentence, a feeling of joy came over me. At that time I felt that life was far too painful and there was too much suffering in the world, as I had encountered many difficulties when I first started my work. I felt that extinguishing the suffering of birth and death and eliminating all hindrances was exactly what the sentient beings needed in order to be taken out of the bitter cycle of samsara. Therefore, I am fond of this sutra which has been recited by many people ever since the Tang Dynasty. Since this sutra is swiftly efficacious, I have included it in the True Buddha Tantric Dharma practice and hope everyone will recite it.

Following the "Seven World-Honored Buddhas Mantra," which is a very good mantra, one additionally recites "Rebirth Mantra." The Amitabha Buddha's Rebirth Mantra enables one to be reborn in the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds of Sukhavati. This is why one chants the Rebirth Mantra. Is the chanting of the High King Avalokitesvara Sutra and the Rebirth Mantra accompanied by visualization? If one is in the middle of performing a deliverance, then one needs to do a visualization. The simplest method is to form the "Great Ocean Liberation Mudra." After chanting the Rebirth Mantra seven times, visualize a Dharma vessel manifesting to carry the souls to be delivered, which soars up to the spiritual realm above. After this,

one releases the mudra. This is the "Great Ocean Liberation Mudra." [Grand Master demonstrates.] While forming this mudra, one visualizes a vessel appearing in a great ocean, with souls from the nether worlds carried by it to liberation. Afterwards, the mudra is released [at the forehead]. [Grand Master Lu rings the bell.]

Visualizations of the Empowerment of the Three Lights

The Main Body or core of the Liturgy commences with the eighth step. In Tantric practices, the Prologue Section is followed by the Main Body. The Main Body consists of three parts: Visualization (with Mudra), Mantra recitation, and finally Meditation (entering Samadhi). I have often mentioned that when one is travelling, whether by plane or bus, or by any vehicle, or when one is in a hurry to go to work and does not have sufficient time to do the Great Homage, Fourfold Refuge, and Mandala Offering, one can skip the first seven steps and begin with the Main Body. The simplest way to practice when there is such a time constraint is to do just the Main Body, which is Visualization, Mantra recitation, and entering Samadhi. However, during ordinary times, one must do the complete practice, which comprises the Prologue, Main Body, and Epilogue. Only when there is a special reason, such as constraint of time or place, may one practice just the Main Body.

I shall first discuss "Visualization." As an illustration, if one is practicing the Amitabha Personal Deity Yoga, one forms the Amitabha Mudra. This is the Amitabha Root Mudra [Grand Master demonstrates] which differs from the Amitabha Meditation Mudra. This is the Meditation Mudra [Grand Master demonstrates.] Either one of these two mudras can be employed, and then one can begin the visualization. One should bear in mind that there are eight Principal Deities in the True Buddha School, each of which has a specific visualization. The visualizations of Jambhala and Vajrasattva will differ. Each of these deities has his own specific mudra, mantra, and visualization. One can study in detail the *True Buddha Dharma: The Actual Practice* to achieve a thorough understanding of the ritual steps.

Emptying the Mind

Now, let us say that I am practicing the Amitabha Yoga. What kind of visualization do I do? First I empty my mind. Many students have asked me how to empty the mind, because they find they are unable to do so even with their eyes closed. Are they becoming the Amoghasiddhi Buddha?² [laughter] No, they are not! It is just that their minds are very busy with many complicated thoughts, and these thoughts prevent them from emptying their minds. How does one visualize emptiness? In Tantrayana it is taught that a clear, blue and sunny sky, without any trace of clouds, can be visualized as "emptiness." For example, imagine riding inside an airplane, high above all the clouds. One looks out into the sky on a very fine, sunny day and all one sees is clear and untainted sky. One visualizes this cloudless, clear sky and chants the Emptiness Visualization Mantra, "Om, Su-ba-wa, Su-da, Sa-er-wa, Da-er-ma, Su-do-hang." There should be another "Su-ba-wa" before the "Su-do-hang." It should be "Om, Su-ba-wa, Su-da, Sa-er-wa, Da-er-ma, Su-ba-wa, Su-do-hang." When I recited the mantra, I was afraid that I would make a mistake. It turns out that the more thought I gave to this notion, the more mistakes I made! [audience laughter] Normally when I recite this mantra, I don't make any mistakes. Perhaps I was nervous in the presence of so many people. The correct Emptiness Visualization Mantra is "Om, Su-ba-wa, Su-da, Sa-er-wa, Da-er-ma, Su-ba-wa, Su-do-hang." One must chant the correct mantra, as it is not acceptable to miss even one word. If I am practicing by myself, I recite the mantra correctly. However, facing an audience, I sometimes cannot enunciate the words clearly. [audience laughter] Clear enunciation in public speaking requires extensive training. Sometimes when one tries hard to correctly enunciate the mantra sound, the opposite happens.

²Grand Master made a pun here with the name of Amoghasiddhi Buddha in Chinese which is made up of five characters with the first two characters meaning "not empty".

Also, if someone has one front tooth missing, one's enunciation of the mantra will be indistinct and there will be a lot of "sh" sounds mixed with it. In any case, even if one is usually able to chant the mantra correctly and quickly, if an occasion demands one to enunciate it correctly, the opposite happens. What kind of psychological rationale is involved in this? I do not know.

Moon Disc Visualizaton

The Emptiness Visualization Mantra is used to enhance and facilitate the emptying of the mind. After the mind is emptied, one proceeds to do the visualization. First, one forms the Amitabha Root Mudra, then one visualizes an expanse of ocean surface appearing below the Emptiness. Above is the stretch of Emptiness and below is the ocean.

At the horizon, a very large moon disc rises. In other words, a perfectly round, blue moon disc is suspended between the ocean and the Emptiness. Why must one visualize a moon disc? I used to ask the following question: why is it that a moon disc, and not a sun disc, stars, or anything else for that matter, is to be visualized? The answer is that the light of the sun is too strong and one's eyes cannot bear it. The stars, on the other hand, are too small for visualization. What else in the universe can be used as a symbol for purity? The moon or the moon disc is the purest. Visualizing the moon disc connotes purity.

What else does the moon disc represent? A moon disc also represents "Siddhi," as referred to in the mantra, "Om, guru, Lian-sheng siddhi hum." Siddhi is the Land of the Buddha or the Pure Land. So, in one's frequent visualization of the moon disc, one visualizes a stretch of clear, cloudless sky with an expanse of ocean below and a moon disc rising up above the horizon. The moon disc is the "Siddhi," the Pure Land, the Buddha Land. This visualization has to be done clearly.

Seed Syllable and Personal Deity

Next, one visualizes the seed syllable "hri" appearing at the center of the moon disc. Someone asked me what is the color of this syllable? As Amitabha is associated with the west direction and the color red, this syllable should be in red. When the seed syllable manifests, it should be very clear. In the clear, cloudless sky, a moon disc with the red "hri" manifests and suspends over a huge expanse of ocean. This visualization should also be very clear.

The seed syllable "hri" is red in color. What does "hri" represent? It represents the seed Consciousness, or Buddha Nature, of the practitioner. Thus, one's Buddha Nature is on the moon disc amid an expanse of Emptiness. When one practices the Amitabha Deity Yoga, the red syllable "hri" appears on the moon disc and rotates to transform into Amitabha. Amitabha steps out of the moon disc and manifests in front of one. In the Emptiness above, one's Personal Deity manifests. Does one understand how to perform such a visualization now?

How is Amitabha related to oneself? Amitabha is one's Dharma Body [innermost being]. Three visualizations are involved in this step: the Moon Disc Visualization, the Seed Syllable Visualization, and the Personal Deity Visualization which translate respectively into the Siddhi (Buddha Land), Buddha Nature, and Dharma Body. When this practice is perfected, one's Dharma Body becomes Amitabha, and, at this stage, one can manifest this realized inner being as one thousand or ten thousand Amitabhas, which is the same as transforming oneself into one thousand or ten thousand selves. This is subtle and extremely profound.

Solving the Problems of Visualization

Many people have said to me, "Grand Master, I have spent a long time trying to learn visualization, but I still have trouble with it." One should be able to visualize a clear, sunny, cloudless sky, shouldn't one? One can visualize an ocean, can't

one? Between the ocean and sky is the moon and one should be able to visualize that. One shouldn't have too much difficulty with just the one seed syllable "hri." The emergence of Amitabha from the moon also can be very clear!

One should often look at the image of Amitabha and study his features. His ears are huge and long, the eyebrows are crescent shaped, the eyes ocean-like, the nose mountain-like, the lips are very majestic, his face full and perfect with a crown protrusion on top of his head. The facial appearance and body are very majestic and proper. He is wearing layers of celestial garments and holding a lotus in his hand. His toes and his lotus throne can also be visualized clearly and in great detail. Very majestic! I can clearly visualize his majestic image at this very moment.

A student still insisted, "I just can't do it." "What is the problem then?" I asked. He said, "Every time I visualize the blue moon disc, it becomes black. I just can't seem to visualize the color blue." "Are you color-blind?" I inquired, and he said no. I then told him, "In that case, look more often at the color blue, study it carefully and commit it to memory. There definitely will come a day when you can see it with your mind's eye."

He said, "I can't write the Sanskrit syllable either." I told him, "Books of Sanskrit syllables are available, and one can purchase a copy and study the particular syllable which one has to learn. One can trace the syllable once, twice, thrice, four times, or even thousands or tens of thousands of times. Eventually one will be able to write and visualize the syllable very well." He followed my advice and was able to visualize the syllable successfully.

"But there is another problem with the visualization of the Personal Deity!" he continued. What then, was this problem? It turned out that his Personal Deity always appeared leaning to one side. I told this student, "Focus your mind to bring the Deity back to standing upright." But he said he couldn't. No matter how hard he tried, he said his Personal Deity still appeared lopsided. I wondered if this student's mind

was perhaps lopsided and, as a result, all his visualizations were lopsided. But, there is even a remedy for this.

In the past when I was a land surveyor, I used a plumb line, a ball attached to the end of a piece of string, to determine if a certain pillar or bamboo pole was vertical or not. If it was not vertical, then the pillar or pole would be slowly adjusted, with the help of the plumb line, until it was truly vertical. The basketball pole we have here at the Rainbow Villa was set up by me using a piece of string attached to a piece of rock, since I did not have a professional plumb line with me. It was perfectly vertical when it was finished. Of course, since it has been very windy these last several days, the basketball pole might be lopsided now!

Another student had a different problem: each time he visualized the Amitabha, he would get a side view instead of a front view of the Buddha. It was strange; the Buddha turned to one side as soon as He appeared. Amitabha did not want to pay attention to him. Does this kind of phenomenon exist? It does. What should one do? Just use a "mental eraser" to erase it, then start a new picture. Someone related such a problem to me, and I told him to do a new visualization to adjust the Buddha back to the frontal view. Or one could try blowing air with one's mouth [Grand Master demonstrates to audience laughter] to move the Buddha back to the frontal view. I don't believe that He would always remain sideways.

I have given the following true example before. One student emulated the Grand Master in performing the Food Transformation Offering. He chanted the name of Garuda while visualizing the appearance of a great golden winged bird. It was an immense bird that flew out of the spiritual realm. "The Great Garuda" and "Ghosts and Spirits of the Wilderness" were the objects of his food offering. He could visualize the golden bird very well, but the trouble was he would then visualize an arrow being shot at the bird. [audience laughter] One has to know that this arrow of his was also huge and it would always hit the bird and *thump* the bird would fall. [audience laughter] Flustered and exasperated, he came to me saying, "Grand Master,

I can't do this practice." I asked him for an explanation. He said, "Every time I visualize the Garuda, a wicked thought arises and a golden arrow is shot from one side and kills the bird." This was quite a problem! [audience laughter] This particular student had a great deal of negative karmic force and in his mind were seeds of wickedness. The good karmic force (affinity with the Buddhadharma and cultivation) and the wicked karmic force were intertwined. Everytime he did the proper visualization, the improper would also appear.

This student would look at the guru's porcelain statue, whose eyes are actually very solemn and dignified, and instead find lust in the guru's eyes. [audience laughter] He then complained that he could not do the cultivation because the guru's eyes turned lustful all the time. Heavens! When have I ever acted like that? [audience laughter] But that was what he thought happened to him and what he told me. It was due to heavy karmic hindrances.

This kind of negative mental projection blocks spiritual development on the path of cultivation. The only way to destroy such an obstacle is to cultivate noble and correct thoughts. One's mind and heart have to open up. One should often visit places with mountains and water, to look at nature —mountains, oceans, sky, earth, sun, moon, and stars. When an open and infinite mind is generated and cultivated, no improper thoughts will arise during visualization. One's thoughts will automatically become very pure, and the Amitabha visualized will be very dignified and majestic. He will bless the practitioner by radiating the three lights (white, red, and blue), which will merge into one's physical and spiritual being.

In the past, I have mentioned that the ritual implements held by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas also can radiate spiritual light to shine upon and empower one. From the lotus throne of a given deity, a white light can travel in an arc to empower one. Sometimes, as in the case of the Cundi Bodhisattva, all eighteen hand-held implements can emit light to empower one.

What can one do to improve the clarity of one's

visualizations? One has to look often at the objects which one needs to visualize. One may even paint a mandala. One may paint a full moon, ocean, seed syllable and, in front of the syllable, Amitabha. When one takes time and mentally paints the eyes, eyebrows, nose, ears, face, crown protrusion, arms, legs, robes, skirts, and majestic adornments, then, over time, the image will be impressed upon one's mind. One's visualization will then be very clear.

One has to know that, when the Tibetan lamas paint the mandalas, they do so with deep inner concentration, so that their minds become identified with the Buddhas. When one visualizes the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, one is doing the same task of linking and identifying one's mind with the Buddhas.

One is painting with consciousness! At such a moment, one is painting one's mind! When one's mind is pure, the visualization will be very sharp and clear. If one's mind is impure, of course the visualization will be tainted and unfocused; even unwholesome thoughts will manifest themselves in one's visualization.

The Empowerment of the Three Lights

The empowerment of the three lights is to cleanse and restore the original integrity of one's body, mind, and speech. The process of cultivation is an ongoing purification of the mind. In this visualization, there are spiritual lights from the Siddhi, Buddha Nature, and Dharma Body shining upon one and purifying one's heart and mind! Let me tell you, when one completely identifies oneself with this light, one no longer has to fear death. When one gets old and sick, running out of time, and actually about to die, what does one rely on at that moment? The moment one dies, the Pure Land and Amitabha will appear if one has developed this inner identification beforehand! That is what one has been training for during ordinary times. The Pure Land, Buddha Nature, Personal Deity and Dharma Body will manifest themselves in front of one! Once one's eyes are shut and death comes, consciousness en-

ters Sukhavati, just as in the visualization practice one does when one is alive. This is the most elementary method of achieving Buddhahood under the guidance of the Buddhas. When the Buddha Pure Land, one's Buddha Nature, and Dharma Body manifest, one then transforms into the Dharma Body and enters directly into the Buddha Pure Land to become a Buddha.

Sutrayana's method of chanting Buddha's name does not reach this level because this realm is reached only by combining visualization with chanting. One can chant "Namo Amitabha" day and night, but lacking visualization, then what actually comes is only mud, as mud [muddy consciousness] is what one has in mind. Without visualization, one cannot enter Amitabha's Pure Land. Although one may very sincerely chant "Namo Amitabha," without the practice of visualization Amitabha's image will not manifest and the three Holy Ones from Sukhavati (Amitabha, Kuan Yin, and Mahasthamaprabhata) will not manifest to guide one to the Pure Land. The chanting is useless then!

Only if Amitabha is very compassionate (not that Amitabha is not compassionate — He is innately compassionate) [audience laughter] and finds that one is indeed very sincere and has been devoting one's mind single-mindedly to chanting His name, will He say, "Very well, since you chant my name sincerely, even if your mind thinks only of mud, I will transform the mud into a lotus to bring you to my Pure Land." So a single-minded concentration is still requisite to the practice of chanting.

Chanting with an image in mind is the same practice as chanting while doing a visualization. When one has properly practiced this kind of method during ordinary times and knows exactly what one is doing, at the time of death, Amitabha will manifest to lead one to Sukhavati, and one will certainly be reborn in the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds. Compassionately, Amitabha will emit the three lights of white, red, and blue from the lotus held in His hands. These will shine upon [one's forehead, throat, and heart respectively] and empower one. This

is the visualization, does everyone understand? There are many kinds of visualization that one can do, the visualizations of the "Moon Disc," "Seed Syllable," and "Personal Deity" are just what I have discussed today.

Jambhala Visualization

There are many different kinds of visualization. For example, in the Yellow Jambhala Yoga, one must visualize the Five Dhyani Buddhas in addition to the Yellow Jambhala, who is suffering from a swollen, right big toe. One then chants the Empowerment Mantra of "Om hum, jen se ah" and visualizes five colored lights shining from the Five Buddhas on the Yellow Jambhala, causing the swelling in his toe to slowly subside. All at once, the Jambhala will be so happy that he starts ringing the bell, which is an expression of joy! Actually, I have not previously taught anyone about the bell ringing, so it is all right if one does not ring the bell, as long as one visualizes the Yellow Jambhala very happy with relief of the swelling in his toe. When the Jambhala is happy, his mongoose will also be very happy and will open its mouth to spit out material wealth one desires, such as cars, houses, and American dollars! This is how I visualize the American dollars: bundles and bundles of them, like the ones collected in the bank at the end of the day. The bundles pile up like a mountain. One becomes very small in front of this mountain of money. How much money is there in such a pile? One should be happy when one thinks of that! [audience laughter] The Yellow Jambhala is also happy.

Subtle Penetration of Mind Through Detailed Visualization

There are other kinds of special visualizations. For example, the Cundi Buddha Mother has three eyes and eighteen arms with eighteen hand-held implements. If one is able to visualize every single one of the implements, one is indeed very extraordinary. If I were the Cundi Buddha Mother, I would

be impressed [audience laughter] and would exclaim, "How wonderful of you to visualize me so clearly and in such detail!" She would be very fond of anyone who could accomplish that.

In any case, during visualization, subtler thoughts bring a more peaceful awareness. The more one penetrates the subtle levels of the mind, the more completely one can achieve a quiet mind and a balanced breath. The more one penetrates into the subtle levels of the mind, the more one's awareness and sensitivity expand. The coarser one's mind is, the less one will experience such results. By a coarse mind, I refer to poor visualization, in which one does not care if the sky has clouds or if the ocean is polluted. [audience laughter] One does not care about the moon disc at all! When the moon disc appears, half of it is missing! [audience laughter] Either the upper half or the lower half is gone. When the Personal Deity manifests, it looks like a Buddha and yet it does not quite look like a Buddha. The same thing can be said about it in regard to its resemblance to a Bodhisattva or Dharma Protector. It is totally nondescript. [audience laughter] So after half a day of such a visualization, one feels nothing when the Deity bestows empowerment. When the visualization is done, one automatically starts to chant the mantra. Many people perform their visualizations in this perfunctory way.

The more detailed the visualization, the more profoundly and subtly will one be able to penetrate into the mind. When one meditates with the most subtle consciousness, one will attain extraordinary results.

The Four Levels of Tantric Dharma

This complete Tantric Liturgy is classified as an external practice in Tantric cultivation. The other classes or levels are internal, esoteric, and inner-esoteric. The fruition of practice of each of these four levels correspond to the four Buddha realms in Sukhavati: the fruition of inner-esoteric practice is the Realm of Eternal Rest and Light, the fruition of esoteric

practice is the Realm of Permanent Reward and Freedom, the fruition of internal practice is the Temporary Realm [where the occupants have gotten rid of the evils of unenlightened views and thoughts, but still have to be reborn], and the fruition of external practice is the Realm Where Ordinary and Holy Beings Dwell. This is the classification within the four realms of Sukhavati.

What I have discussed so far is only the external practice! In terms of the Buddha Pure Lands, the four levels of inner-esoteric, esoteric, internal, and external practices translate into the Pure Land of Vairocana, the Avatamsaka Pure Land, the True Buddha Pure Land, and the Ultimate Bliss Pure Land. As these four classes of practice correspond to four different levels of practice, an external level practitioner will begin with the purifying of body, mind, and speech; an internal level practitioner will move on to the Yoga of Energy and be working on the chi, channels, and light drops; an esoteric level practitioner will be working on the Yoga of Mahamudra; and an inner-esoteric level practitioner will abide in the Great Perfection [Dzogchen].

Tantric practices are truly extraordinary! The realms reached by inner-esoteric, esoteric, internal, and external practitioners are respectively those of the Dharma Body, Fully Enlightened Ones, Bodhisattvas, and Arhats. However, this classification might not be the most accurate, as there can be some overlapping. I am generalizing somewhat in describing the different levels. In terms of the Three Bodies, Fully Enlightened Ones and beings residing in the Pure Lands are of the Bliss Body, the Emanation Body will be found in the Realm Where Ordinary And Holy Beings Dwell, and the Dharma Body will have to be reached by the inner-esoteric practice. Which aspect of the Three Bodies is Padmakumara? Padmakumara is the Bliss Body. How about Sheng-yen Lu? Sheng-yen Lu is the Emanation Body. Which aspect of the Three Bodies is Mahavairocana? The Dharma Body. Both Buddha Locana and Padmakumara are of the realm of the Bliss Body. Sheng-yen Lu is the Emanation Body. This is the division of the Three

Bodies.

Therefore, in our cultivation, there are four grades of practice: external, internal, esoteric, and inner-esoteric, which correspond to: the External True Buddha Tantric Practice, the Internal True Buddha Tantric Practice of chi, channels, and light drops, the Esoteric Practice of Mahamudra and Highest Tantra Yoga, and the Inner-esoteric Practice of Great Perfection. These are the grades of the path.

Mantra Recitation

The next segment after visualization is mantra recitation. [Grand Master Lu rings the bell.] Generally, when people get to this step, they will pick up the mala like this. [Grand Master demonstrates.] Others might rest the mala on their laps and start chanting "Om ah-mi-deh-wa-seh, Om ah-mi-deh-wa-seh" while counting the beads. All these positions are incorrect. One should hold the mala in front of one's chest and concentrate on the recitation.

In the past I did not teach how one should recite and count the beads. It was entirely up to the person. We simply began by chanting "Om mani padme hum, Om mani padme hum" and stopped when we reached a set number of recitations.

So, what is the significance of mantra recitation? Mantra recitation is the purification of speech. A true practitioner also visualizes before recitation begins. I will explain, so everyone will have a clear understanding of it!

Visualization before Chanting

First, as soon as the mala is picked up, the right hand is visualized turning into a vajra and the left hand into a bell. In a mala, there are four beads larger than the rest. As in this mala, [Grand Master demonstrates] a mother bead and three other beads of red color separate the remaining beads into four segments. These four larger beads have to transform into the Four Deva-Kings. Visualize the Four Deva-Kings appear above the mala. How should one visualize the tassel of the mala? Some people call this the "whiskers." [audience laughter] Talking about whiskers, some people were discussing how the bronze statue here at the Rainbow Villa bears quite a resemblance to me, and how the bronze statue at the Pootee Lei Tsang Temple [in Vancouver] is supposed to be even more lifelike. But some children pointed out that all these statues are still not

quite lifelike, as they all lack the “whiskers” that are growing out of my neck! [laughter] Going back to the tassel or “whiskers” of the mala, what is the associated visualization? It transforms into a lotus hand. Have you ever seen a lotus hand? It is a hand in the shape of a lotus blossom. I have seen such a sculpted object placed in a censer in a temple. It is a Buddha hand but it is also known as a lotus hand. So one visualizes the tassel turn into a lotus hand, the four larger beads into the Four Deva-kings, the right hand into a vajra, and the left hand into a bell. The thread that goes through the beads is visualized transforming into a circle of white light of the Vajrasattva (the primordial nature of the Vajrasattva).

Visualization during Chanting

After performing this visualization, one starts chanting, “Om, ah-mi-deh-wa-seh.” During recitation, one also must visualize every single bead coming to the center in front of one and at the center of each bead is an Amitabha. I know this sounds quite cumbersome, but I don’t think there are many occasions when one gets to hear Tantric practices being described in such detail. I myself have practiced this way for more than twenty years! The Supreme Consciousness of the Universe has taught me very carefully. Manjusri Bodhisattva, Tsongkhapa, Padmasambhava, Mr. Three-Peaks-Nine-States, and Taoist Master Ching Chen have explained each step very carefully to me. This kind of esoteric recitation is infinitely expansive, profound, subtle, and brings one the greatest achievement!

Students are accustomed to merely chanting the mantra one hundred eight times during this step of the practice and, when the chanting is finished, one puts the mala aside. But, apart from the purification of the speech through recitation, there is also the involvement of the mind and the body. While chanting, one is also forming the mudra — the vajra, bell, Vajrasattva string that threads through the mala, Four Deva-kings, Personal Deity, and lotus hand are the mudra! Isn’t one

purifying one’s mind when one visualizes Amitabha inside each bead while reciting? Does not each “Om, ah-mi-deh-wa-seh” purify one’s speech? This is the practice of the Unification of the Three Secrets, an excellent Tantric method that integrates the subtle levels of the mind. It is a complete Tantric practice, without any missing parts. It teaches one how to visualize, how to chant mantra, how to form mudra, and how to enter Samadhi.

A Practice of Patience and Faith

What I have previously written in books is just an introduction to make the Tantric practice easier to understand prior to the teaching of the external practice. In the future, I will teach the internal practice, starting with the psychic heat yoga, which awakens the kundalini via the steps of "lowering, raising, holding, and dispersing." When I reach fifty, I will help students ignite the inner fire and open up the middle channel. However, even before I taught the external practice, many students had already given up their aspirations and left before I had the chance to teach them. The deal was called off! [audience laughter] I had not even started, yet many of them felt that they had already learned everything. How strange! There are many methods I intend to share and teach which cannot be hurried, but some students become impatient. They start having these diseases in their minds and bodies, these odd feelings that they have already learned everything.

Some students even commented, "Master Lu practices the same old thing every day inside the Tantric shrine, gesticulating and mumbling. Can Enlightenment be so simple? This must be a false Dharma. Can one really reach Enlightenment by practicing this way each day?" I have been asked this question and am deeply grieved. The point to understand is that I must assess the qualities and character of all of the students during their practice to determine whether they could engage the True Buddha Tantric Dharma practice. With this foundation it would then be possible to teach them the next higher level of practice. But before I could give a complete explanation of the first level of the external practice, many students already lost the will to cultivate and the "deal was off." A student who leaves is gone, and I cannot bring them back.

In reality, spiritual cultivation is a process that requires repeated tempering. Opportunists will not accomplish anything lasting because they lack a firm faith! Shallow people fall down

when a casual breeze comes along. Frankly, our school has too many students and there is a need to cull the unworthy. At the end, only the pure, golden ones will remain for intensive training to reach Enlightenment. That is in fact the method employed by a Buddha to liberate the living beings.

If one lacks a strong faith, then no amount of argument will convince such a person. This is a matter of affinity. Perhaps this person, in his previous lifetimes, has not eaten any of the meals I have offered! [audience laughter] Therefore he or she does not have to pay anything back. Perhaps they want to make my life easier — fewer students means less trouble and more tranquility! Sometimes I feel very sad when I offer such a good thing to people and they don't want it. It is such a precious thing and still they don't want it. I am offering it free, and yet they refuse to accept it. This makes me want to cry my heart out, and it is the reason behind my grief.

I have attained self-mastery and am liberated and happy. All subconscious worries and anxieties are completely released by realization which merges the mind into the Universe, an extraordinary and transcendental state. There is no longer any phenomenon in the universe that can unbalance me. Now all I have is this warm and sincere desire to help sentient beings achieve liberation. It is due to this that I grieve and shed tears. What else is there to cause me to worry or for me to grasp onto? Today I ask everyone to reflect on what is there that one cannot let go of? Is it one's family, spouse, children, money, prestige, career, or health? All these things are only mundane and belong to the earth. Only spiritual cultivation can lead one to Enlightenment and Liberation.

Only when one comes upon the great Dharma and works diligently to reach the state of eternal life (of non-birth and non-extinction), will one be truly liberated from cares and worries. The One Mind transcends birth and death. What is the purpose of human life? Spiritual realization manifests as infinite bliss, and this is the greatest meaning of human life!

A Free and Democratic School

Yesterday at dinner I discussed a view I used to have. I used to think that I had to have a son who would inherit my family line from me, so that the Lu family would continue. This is a very traditional Chinese view. But when one brings one's son to America, all traditional hope is finished! He does not really attach the same kind of importance to his family name as his parents do. He will start a new root in America. He might marry a wife with blond hair and blue eyes and his children might have blond hair and blue eyes. They will not be able to write the family name "Lu" in Chinese, as it will be written in English. Can one expect one's son to attach the same kind of value to the preservation of the family name from generation to generation? No, not anymore. Here in America, he would not feel that it is an honor to be a descendant of the Lu family. Here, there is absolutely no such thing. Nor would he place any hopes on the younger generation with the same last name as his. No! This kind of traditional ideas will probably be gone in the first couple of generations after transplanting to America. They probably will not know from where their ancestors originally came. The importance attached to passing from one generation to another is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese belief, as is evidenced by the record-keeping of one's clan or family tree. However, when one brings one's son to America, the book of one's family tree might as well be thrown into the fireplace. In America, one cannot hold one's children against their will, as they can go to court and press charges against one. [audience laughter] Try to lock them up or hit them once, they will report it to their teacher, who will report it to the school, which will press charges against the parents and that would be terrible! [audience laughter]

Therefore one really cannot place any high expectations on one's children. I only hope that they will live well, and I think it would be very nice if they don't bring me any troubles. Take Fo Ching, my daughter, as an example. Sometimes I do

worry about her. Why? Because her grades are too good. It is a nuisance because she wants to maintain a 4.0 grade point average. She has always gotten a 4.0 for her classes, which is a perfect record. She's never received even a 3.9. She said she wanted to trade in her old car for a new jeep. [audience laughter] I told her that she would have to meet one condition first: her grade point average would have to drop below 4.0, then I would buy the jeep for her. [audience laughter] "Don't maintain that 4.0 forever," I told her. "I get mad seeing that 4.0." [audience laughter] She works so hard in high school and joins so many clubs and organizations, volunteering for so many activities. In the evenings, she has to write essays, prepare study notes, and do math. Because she is taking many courses and studying so hard, she feels a serious lack of time. That was why I took pity on her and told her that she did not have to maintain the 4.0, nor apply to Stanford, Harvard, or Yale! Well, she doesn't have to go to the "Ah Lu," which is Yale in Taiwanese! [audience laughter] She wants to go to Yale, Harvard, or Stanford, but I told her not to. I told her that going to the B.C.C., the Bellevue Community College, would be sufficient. [audience laughter] There is no need to go to a premier university.

As for Fo Chi, my son, this is what I told him. [Grand Master turns to Master Lian-hsiang and asks.] "Would it be all right to talk about it here?" [Audience uproar of laughter] I told him that just graduating from high school was enough. [audience laughter] I want this child to live normally, and ask only that he support himself. One should not place too high hopes on him! Actually from my standpoint, I just want my children to develop naturally, without putting any limitations on them. I just hope they will live happily and normally. This would be fine. As parents, our minds should be relatively at ease when these conditions are met. We should not demand our children to achieve high honors to bring glorification to our family line. Such expectations are impossible, aren't they? Children growing up in America have their own ideas about life, and we should not try to control them.

By the same token, our school is also a free and democratic school. I seldom put any limitations on students, and they can come and go as they wish. I just want to say that Tantric practice is a way of life and technique for inner evolution. The True Buddha Tantric Dharma is very precious, and, when one comes in search of teaching, I will definitely teach the true, great Dharma that suits one's spiritual maturity. It is a matter of levels. For example, when one obtains a yogic response in the first level practice, then I definitely teach the second level practice. When one obtains a yogic response in the second level practice, then I certainly teach the third level practice.

The most important key to the meaning of human life lies in spiritual cultivation. With the availability of such an effective Tantric Dharma, I, of course, hope that everyone can accept it and practice it with perseverance. If a student claims a need for self-direction and freedom, I will not interfere, since I also advocate democracy and freedom. I am also a "naturalist" and yield to nature. Indeed, any individual's development unfolds by natural law. In teaching everyone this Way, I have truly opened up my heart and soul, just as I have to the children. So, being a "naturalist," my final conclusion is that those who have an affinity with the Dharma will come to hear the teaching, while those who lack such affinity will not. Similarly, those who practice seriously have strong affinity while those who practice perfunctorily have casual affinity. That is only natural. But I do emphasize that the True Buddha Tantric Dharma is a correct Dharma that is authentic, precious, and powerful.

Tomorrow I shall discuss how to enter into Samadhi. I also will talk about the Epilogue portion of the Liturgy, as the entire Liturgy is divided into Prologue, Main Body, and Epilogue. I also will discuss ritual implements. If there is sufficient time, I will discuss how these ritual implements, such as the vajra, bell, and the damaru are employed. The most important ritual implements in Tantrayana are the vajra, bell, mala, and the damaru, and these are quite sufficient for a Tantric

practitioner. That concludes today's teaching.
Om Mani Padme Hum.

*Fourth Day:
November 27, 1992*

Introduction

Masters and fellow cultivators, good afternoon. Today is the fourth day of the Complete and Detailed Exposition on the True Buddha Tantric Dharma. Before the teaching proper, I would like to briefly discuss the subjects of "Buddhahood by Guidance" and "Buddhahood in the present body."

There was an eminent Buddhist monk who, during one of his Dharma teachings, was asked by many people if it would be possible to attain "Buddhahood in the present body." This eminent monk replied, "Practically, there is no such thing as 'Buddhahood in the present body.' So-called 'Buddhahood in the present body' is most likely a fib." One can deduce from his answer that this monk had not given much thought to the question, because the reply he gave was equivalent to reprimanding Buddha Shakyamuni. As we all know, the Enlightenment of Buddha Shakyamuni is a perfect example of "Buddhahood in the present body." While in samsara, sitting under the pipal tree, Shakyamuni caught a glimpse of the Luminous Star [the nature of mind], directly recognized the pure nature of being, and thus became a Buddha. When this eminent Buddhist monk announced that there was no such thing as "Buddhahood in the present body," that it was just a fib, was he not accusing Buddha Shakyamuni of not really attaining Buddhahood in samsara, and that the whole incident was just a hoax?

Buddhahood in the Present Body is Possible

There are also some people who think this way: Buddha Shakyamuni was an exceptional being of incomparable faculties who could achieve "Buddhahood in the present body" after many lifetimes of spiritual practice; however, it would be impossible for ordinary cultivators to attain instant awakening. Again, from that eminent monk's point of view, all the billions of other sentient beings are denied the chance to achieve "Buddhahood in the present body."

And yet Buddha Shakyamuni reached the realm of Buddhahood directly from the realm of men. With a foundation built upon many samsaric lifetimes of spiritual cultivation, there definitely comes one lifetime wherein one may directly ascend to become a Buddha.

What then is the difference between "Buddhahood in the present body" and "Buddhahood by Guidance"? I will address this later. Did anybody else, besides Buddha Shakyamuni, directly realize Buddhahood in the human realm? Yes, Nagarjuna and Ashvaghosa are such examples, and so are many other Bodhisattvas. However, attaining "Buddhahood in the present body" is not confined to those in the human realm. For example, the Adi or Primordial Buddha attained "Buddhahood in the present body" from the Fourth Immaterial Heaven [where there is neither thinking nor not-thinking] within the Formless Realm. The Great Sun Tathagata or Vairocana Buddha attained "Buddhahood in the present body" from the Mahesvara Heaven within the Realm of Form. Buddha Shakyamuni attained "Buddhahood in the present body" while in the samsaric realm of men. These are just some examples of "Buddhahood in the present body," human or otherwise.

Tantrayana teaches the practice of "Buddhahood in the present body" while exoteric schools generally teach the practice of "Buddhahood by Guidance." What then is the difference between these two phenomena?

Buddhahood by Guidance

The secret of exoteric schools' "Buddhahood by Guidance" lies in the practice of "a single-minded concentration." It is recorded in the *Amitabha Sutra* that, when one is dying, one can chant the name of Amitabha with a single-minded concentration for one to seven days. Amitabha Buddha will then manifest before one to lead one to His Pure Realm of Sukhavati. There is a similar practice in Tantrayana called the Buddhahood in Seven Days. In this practice, one constantly visualizes oneself transforming into the seed syllable Hum

(ॐ), and the Buddha is envisioned as the syllable Ah (ॐ). For one to seven days, one visualizes this Ah descending from above, with the hook hooking through the circle part of the Hum and pulling the Hum up towards the heavens. This is the Buddhahood in Seven Days Method taught in Tantric Buddhism. Nevertheless, whether it is the Scriptural Seven Days or Tantric Seven Days Method, it is still a "Buddhahood by Guidance" method.

Yesterday I described how a Buddhist practitioner who is very skillful in the practice of chanting, be it the chanting of a mantra or Amitabha's epithet, can attain a level of continuous pure consciousness which will invoke Amitabha into manifestation when one dies. When such a practitioner closes his or her eyes at the critical moment of death, Amitabha will manifest to direct the consciousness from the dying body to His Pure Land. A more advanced approach within the scriptural tradition is to chant while visualizing the image of Amitabha. This is a method that surely can enable one to arrive at the Sukhavati through the guidance of Amitabha.

Nowadays, the goal of most Buddhists is "Buddhahood by Guidance." Success in "Buddhahood by Guidance" requires a combination of both the "power of oneself" and the "power of the Buddha." The latter refers to Amitabha's vow that, as long as one chants his name single-mindedly for one to seven days, He will come to lead one to Sukhavati. What is the "power of oneself"? This refers to the effort one puts into the chanting of the Buddha's name. When one is able to focus one's mind on chanting without any distraction and if, at the moment of dying, one's mind is still completely focused on Sukhavati and on Amitabha, then Amitabha will manifest to lead one away. This happens when the power which is generated from one's own longing for Sukhavati reaches out and becomes connected with the power generated from the vow of Amitabha. This kind of liberation, which is achieved through coordination of "self-power" and "Buddha power," is called "Buddhahood by Guidance."

Buddhahood in the Present Body

What is "Buddhahood in the present body"? It refers to the achievement of Enlightenment and Buddhahood in the present life through a complete reliance on one's self-power developed in spiritual practice. One directly realizes the supreme wisdoms of the Buddhas through transforming the ordinary obscured mind into the pure unobscured nature of mind. The karmic distortions of ordinary body, speech, and mind are purified to reveal the Transcendent Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddhas. When one attains the secret of the Great Sun Tathagata which is the purification of body, speech, and mind, one's ordinary mind is transformed into the five wisdoms of the Buddhas. This transformation is the attainment of "Buddhahood in the present body."

When one integrates one's three dimensions of being with the Action, Expression, and Awareness of the Enlightened Ones, the result is a transformation of the ordinary human consciousness into the five great wisdom energies of the Buddhas and the actualization of the three dimensions of a Buddha's being. The three bodies of Buddhahood — Dharma Body, Bliss Body, and Emanation Body — are manifested through oneself. At the highest level of Tantrayana practice, when one completely identifies with the subtlest, most essential state of "Buddha Nature," one attains "Buddhahood in the present body." At such a moment, one does not need to rely on the guidance of Amitabha, because one continuously experiences the Five Buddha Wisdoms and a complete liberation from within. Therefore Tantrayana is an extremely lofty practice as it enables one to achieve "Buddhahood in the present body." Both "Buddhahood by Guidance" and "Buddhahood in the present body" are very great achievements, yet they belong to two different levels of practice.

The Assurance of Enlightenment through Tantric Practice

The path of spiritual cultivation is the most important and valuable path one can pursue during one's life on earth. I hope everyone understands what "Buddhahood by Guidance" and "Buddhahood in the present body" are and the differences between them. Some students have expressed the feeling that they find "Buddhahood in the present body" too difficult to attain in this life and they would rather aim at achieving "Buddhahood by Guidance" when they die. That is all right. If one learns how to do the External Practice of our True Buddha Tantric Dharma and achieves a yogic union with one's Personal Deity, then I can offer assurance that one will obtain "Buddhahood by Guidance" when one dies. If one decides that the Internal Practice of "chi, channels, and light drops," the Highest Tantra, the Great Perfection, or the abolition of Duality is too hard to pursue, one should at least attempt to achieve communion with one's Personal Deity through the Personal Deity Yoga.

In Tantra, if one attains a yogic response in the Four Preliminary Practices, then one has already laid down a foundation for "Buddhahood by Guidance." So, if one has attained a yogic response in the Guru Yoga, and if I don't come to guide one when one dies, then it could be I am on vacation! [audience laughter] Actually this won't happen because, when one attains yogic response in the Guru Yoga, Padmakumara, being a manifestation of the Dharma Body, will know when one is dying and will come to give one guidance. Even if I am on vacation, the other manifestation of the Dharma Body, Padmakumara, will certainly come to guide one to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds. If one achieves yogic response in the Personal Deity Yoga, the Personal Deity will definitely come to guide one to Sukhavati or the Personal Deity's own Pure Land. One can see that the attainment of yogic response is a kind of assurance. Without a yogic response, there is no assurance. One surely knows that one has achieved a yogic response when

one chants constantly the Guru or Personal Deity's mantra and, as soon as one closes one's eyes, one can immediately see the Guru or Personal Deity in the mind's eye.

In order to realize "Buddhahood by Guidance," one must practice until one achieves yogic response in the Personal Deity Yoga and is able to go to the Personal Deity's Pure Land. When one achieves yogic response in the Guru Yoga, one is able to go to the Maha Twin Lotus Ponds. When one achieves a spiritual response in the Four Preliminary Practices, one already has laid down the groundwork for the realization of "Buddhahood by Guidance." That is why in the practice of our True Buddha Tantric Dharma, one has to achieve a yogic response in the Four Preliminary Practices, the Guru Yoga, and the Personal Deity Yoga in order to be assured of "Buddhahood by Guidance." Such a level of realization equals the level of realization that can be reached by the Sutrayana practice. In fact, such a realization in Tantric practice even exceeds that of the Sutric school because, in addition, we practice entering into Samadhi!

Today I am going to discuss how to enter into Samadhi. Samadhi means inner stability developed through formal meditation. The Pure Land School, of course, also uses the term meditation, but in the sense of simple recitation and single-minded concentration on rebirth in the Western Pure Land. In truth, this single-minded concentration is a kind of stability! In our True Buddha daily practice, one is already practicing meditation and, when one becomes skillful in meditation, one will be able to purify the faculties of body, speech, and mind, and transmute the ordinary obscured mind into the wisdom mind. In other words, through meditation, one can attain "Buddhahood in the present body."

The Quickest Way to Instantaneous Enlightenment

One should be aware of the implications of "Buddhahood in the present body." When one attains Buddhahood in

this life, one's ideas and concepts will differ radically from those held by the ordinary people of the world. An enlightened person soars to a very lofty and transcendent realm of consciousness wherein the manifest world is no more than a speck of dust or a grain of sand. How can one describe this? Some people liken it to a grain of sand returning to the mountain or a drop of water merging with the ocean. This kind of analogy, while perhaps not the most appropriate, at least can be easily understood. So, realizing the Buddha Mind or Enlightenment is like a grain of sand returning to the mountain or a drop of water returning to the ocean.

Once, a student of Guru Norras wanted his guru to teach him the quickest and easiest way to achieve Instantaneous Enlightenment. Holding a knife in his hand, this student threatened his guru, "Don't be so wordy. Today I just want you to tell me the one practice that will swiftly bring Enlightenment to me." He demanded that Guru Norras tell him right away. Under such circumstances, Guru Norras simply responded, "Take in a deep breath and then exhale. While you breathe out, let your mind follow the breath out. This way you will attain Enlightenment." Oh! It sounds very simple! Just inhale deeply, exhale, let the mind follow the breath out, and one will attain Enlightenment! It can be easily described, but is hard to carry out. This is a method known as the "Returning to Emptiness Method." Is there anyone who is able to release the mind simultaneously with the outgoing breath? Indeed, when one's mind goes out with the outgoing breath, one will truly attain Enlightenment!

Just consider this: the key of the Tantric Bardo Deliverance Practice (the Great Illusory Net Transformation Tantric Practice) relies solely on the release of the mind through the crown of the head at the time of death. The mind is the Buddha! When one's mind (the subtle consciousness) follows the exhalation out, exiting through the crown, is that not liberation? What is most frightening is when the subtle mind cannot find any suitable exit at the time of death or when it is too obscured by habitual involvements to leave the human world

and the physical body. When that happens, suffering and torment occur. Therefore, if one is able to completely let go of the body and transport the innate Buddha Mind out into the Universe in one breath, one will indeed attain Enlightenment. The words of Guru Norras contain a profound truth, but it will take a great deal of practice before one is able to transport one's mind out with one's breath.

The Entering into Samadhi

Good! We will now discuss the methods of how to enter into Samadhi. [Grand Master Lu rings the bell.] In my books and practice texts I have often mentioned that one first has to do the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise and then the Inner Fire Exercise before entering Samadhi. Actually one only needs to perform the Nine Round Buddha Breath and may save the Inner Fire Exercise for when one embarks on the Internal Practice. If one is already proficient in igniting the inner fire, then one may include this step in the liturgy. However, if one's inner fire is not yet kindled or, instead of inner fire, if one actually has an inner frost which practically makes it impossible for the fire to be lit, then one will only feel a coldness all over when one does this visualization during the practice. The effort will be spent in vain. Therefore, one should first do the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise and postpone the Inner Fire Exercise to the stage of Internal Practice.

What is Samadhi? Samadhi is "inner stability" or "inner stillness," which is the goal for sitting meditation! Therefore Samadhi is extremely important. In Buddhism, there is the "Study of the Three Non-outflows" wherein one aims to attain disciplines (abiding in precepts), stability, and wisdom. Why does one have to have disciplines? It is so that one can obtain stability. Why does one practice asceticism? It is so that one can obtain stability. Why does one practice non-asceticism? It is also so that one can obtain stability. There are many practice methods, and all their goals are aimed at achieving the state of stability. From stability or stillness, the supreme wisdom or Transcendent Awareness is generated. Without stability, one cannot secure wisdom.

Many people say that they cannot practice stillness or meditation, as their minds are always racing in different directions and remain confused. Instead of always in focused concentration, they are always distracted. When one is distracted and confused, will wisdom be generated? When one is psy-

chologically disoriented, emotionally unbalanced, and physically tense, the innate wisdom is temporarily dispersed and lost, and one will commit many acts that are unreasonable and even unlawful. In moments of confusion, one will commit all kinds of outrages. A person who abides in an inner stability handles every single matter with the supreme wisdom that is generated from this inner stability. There is no problem that cannot be solved when one approaches it with wisdom. Without this inner stability, such wisdom or insight will not be produced. All Five Buddha Wisdoms manifest from inner stillness.

Disciplines Give Rise to Stability

The purpose of disciplines is to secure stillness. Therefore those spiritual cultivators who practice renunciation and asceticism in the Himalayas, India, Tibet, and other remote areas are all seeking this state of stillness. In Buddhism, if one has obtained this stillness, one will no longer be bound by disciplines. The purpose of disciplines is to generate this stillness so, when one truly knows what stillness is, one can transcend the limit of the disciplines. This is very profound. It does not mean that one does not have to observe the disciplines anymore, nor does it mean that one can be unruly and act as one pleases. One must know that, when one becomes unruly and acts arbitrarily, the inner stability will be lost. Once this inner stability or equilibrium is lost, wisdom will remain hidden. From this standpoint alone, it would be wrong to abandon the disciplines. So I say this: if one can remain centered in this inner stability, one does not have to be bound by the disciplines; if one cannot remain centered in this inner stability, one must continue to observe the disciplines. This is a profound truth.

Some students have criticized me for singing Karaoke, dancing Tango, and drinking liquors — actions which I have done in the past but don't do anymore. They commented, "How can a guru have such indulgences?" They found such actions offensive and wrote me notes asking me to quit doing them.

They were trying to supervise me! [audience laughter] It is not easy to be a master, many students like to supervise the master! [audience laughter] I would rather be the student since, besides writing notes to the master, I could make transgressions without letting the master do anything about it. [audience laughter]

The question is: can one remain centered in one's mind after one consumes alcohol? If one still has control of one's mind, then it is all right — one is not drunk. But then, many drunkards also claim "I am not drunk!" [uproar of audience laughter] I, indeed, was able to remain centered and was not drunk. This is the first point. If one does not become drunk, then one can drink. If one drinks, loses control, and breaks the precepts, then one should not drink! When I drink, I am able to remain mindful, so I can drink!

When I was young and living in Kaohsiung, I used to go dancing at the Shirley Dancing Club, which was downstairs from the Hou Te Fu Restaurant by the side of the Love River. The dancing club has since been relocated to the Ling Ya District. I was in my early twenties and quite infatuated with dancing! For example, even if I had gone dancing the day before, the next day I would be waiting to see if some buddy would want my company to go dancing. The dancing girls all wore close-fitting cheongsams, which revealed their curvaceous figures, and their make-up and perfumes exuded strong fragrances. One's sense organs were deluged by the smells, images, and tactile sensations. There were the sensations from hands touching and from close bodily contact. [audience laughter] In Taiwan's dancing clubs, a piece of music with a quick tempo, such as disco, was usually played first. This was followed by a Tango, then a slow piece, such as the blues, and then the pattern would be repeated. During the blues, the slow dance, all the lights would be dimmed and the dancing girl would lean towards one, even if one didn't lean towards her. [audience laughter] It couldn't be helped as it was so dark that one could not see very well and had to grope around. When one went home, the mind would be perturbed and be filled with infatu-

ated thoughts. At such a moment, it would be very easy to lose one's mindfulness.

Buddhism teaches that one should not visit pornographic shops, dancing clubs, or nightclubs. The main reason for this is that it is very easy for one to lose the disciplines or mindfulness in such places. However, if one can remain centered while dancing and regard the dancing as a form of exercise and if, as soon as one goes to bed, one is able to fall asleep without any thought of the dancing — if one still maintains one's mindfulness — then it is all right to dance. If one goes to nightclubs to hear or to sing songs and, when one goes home, one does not dwell on the nightclub, if songs do not continue to swirl inside one's mind, then one may continue to go to nightclubs. If one does not become infatuated with the melodies in the nightclubs, nor with the beautiful women in the dancing clubs, then one may visit these clubs and consider them an embellishment of life.

But I also have been asked by a student, "Grand Master, if you are not infatuated with the songs and dances, then why do you visit the clubs?" Well, his question does make some sense. Do I have to visit those clubs? Since what he said made a valid point, I don't go to clubs anymore. [audience laughter]

The fact is, I can either go or not go and, by this I mean, I am completely free. When the situation of visiting these clubs presents itself, I remain centered, whether I go or not. Because of this ability to remain centered, then, one is still observing the precepts and does not become bound by the precepts.

I did not have this inner stability when I was young. To be candid, there was a period of time in my twenties when I was once vulnerable to seductive influences. Anyway it is a thing of the past. Do I now become infatuated at all? No, it is not possible, not even if the greatest seduction presents itself. Perhaps it is futile to make such a statement, as you might not believe me. [audience laughter] The truth is, when one generates this authentic inner stability in the practice of Tantrayana, one can engage in the practice of the Highest Tantra. However, if one does not have this inner stability, then let me tell

you, it will instead result in the birth of a baby.

There is a level of practice among the highest Tantric practices that only people who have arrived at an inner stability can engage in. This level is, in general, not divulged to people who have not reached such a level in Tantric practices. It is a breaking of the precepts to divulge it. A person who has truly reached this level abides in the precepts without being ruled by them. It is a realm that differs completely from ordinary and worldly customs, conventions, and laws. Under those conditions, such a person is still abiding by the precepts. Do not think that he is not abiding by the precepts because he still is. From discipline, one enters into this inner stability which enables one to abide continuously in the pure nature of mind. It is very simple — when one obtains and maintains this stability, it is equivalent to observing all the precepts. It is an extraordinary power.

Manifestations of Samadhi

What is Samadhi? Samadhi is inner stability. How does one achieve Buddhahood and Liberation? In Samadhi, many people claim that they already have achieved this stability and, therefore, no longer have to observe the precepts. These people need to face their individual conscience and test it to see if they indeed can maintain this stability. When one attains this inner stability, one's body is completely enveloped by a layer of "chi," which is surrounded by fire and then light. This power generated through Samadhi allows one to manifest in multiple bodies and appear in different locations at the same time. Therefore, one simply cannot cheat oneself. It is easy to make false claims that one can enter into Samadhi and achieve inner stability, but one must face one's conscience and ask oneself if one, indeed, has attained this stability? It should be self-evident! Does one still have outflows? Outflows include the outflow of the physical light drops [in the form of sexual fluids] and the outflow of wisdom [in the form of attachments and afflictions]. How can one still have worries if one has achieved

this stability? If one is continuously centered in Samadhi, how can one have any outflows? If one still has outflows, then one has not reached the state of stability in Samadhi.

One might say, "Well, I am sometimes in Samadhi, sometimes not in Samadhi!" [laughter] Perhaps one is able to remain centered in daytime, but not at night. If one says, "Usually I am also able to remain centered at night, except that about once a month I lose control," then, in that case, one still has outflows! One cannot be considered to have achieved true stability. It is only an occasional manifestation of a first level Samadhi.

There are four levels of Samadhi: the so-called Initial Samadhi, the subtle Samadhi, the most subtle Samadhi, and the Firm, Impeccable Samadhi. What is the Firm, Impeccable Samadhi? It is characterized as immovable, powerful, and indestructible. To be impeccable is to be without any errors! In other words, without any outflows! There is no loss of wisdom in the form of mental anxiety or emotional afflictions and no loss of seminal essence — this is an impeccable state. Only when one is able to attain this Firm, Impeccable Samadhi may one be considered to have obtained the true inner stability. Samadhi is inner meditative stability, and today I am sharing my inner experience of this state with all of you.

The Posture of Meditation

After the mantra recitation, one is ready to enter into Samadhi. What kind of mudra does one employ in entering into Samadhi? This is the mudra [the thumb and index finger of each hand form a circle while the other three fingers are extended] which is placed on the knees while one assumes a Half Lotus, Full Lotus, or Easy Posture. [Grand Master demonstrates.] This posture embodies the perfection of Universe Being.

One may also form the Meditation Mudra by bringing the two hands together, with either the left hand on top of the right hand or vice versa [the thumb and index finger of each

hand still forming a circle]. Having one hand above the other embodies the relationship between the elements of water and fire. Having the hands on the knees represents that both the body and mind are in a relaxed state and are merged into the Universe, and that the whole Universe completely embodies one. This other mudra is also acceptable. [Grand Master demonstrates with the thumb and middle finger forming a circle.]

In any of the above body postures, the tongue should be touching the upper palate. The significance of this is that when touching the upper palate, the tongue serves as a conduit for the heavenly nectar [white "awareness drop"] flowing down from the brow-point. Regarding the postures: in both the Half Lotus and Full Lotus positions, the middle channel is straight; in the Easy Posture, the middle channel is curved. In the future, when I teach the Internal Practice, I shall explain in detail how the middle channel can be affected by different postures. As I said, when one assumes the Easy Posture, the middle channel is curved. However, when one assumes the Half Lotus or Full Lotus position, the spinal column and the middle channel are erect and straight. I will explain the key points of this in the future, when I discuss the Internal Practice.

The Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise

At the beginning of the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise¹, does one need to repeat the visualization of a cloudless, sunny sky, ocean, moon disc, seed syllable, and the appearance of the Personal Deity? No, it is not necessary because, during the preceding visualization of the Empowerment of the Three Lights, the Personal Deity has already manifested from the Siddhi and Buddha Nature embodied by the seed syllable. At this point one only needs to close the eyes and visualize the Personal Deity.

There are several breathing methods, of which one needs to take note, which are involved in the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise. I have taught you, haven't I, to inhale a white light which travels through the right channel and is exhaled through the left channel? Next the white light enters through the left channel and exits out the right channel. Then there is

¹The Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise is as follows:

1. Visualize white light enter the right nostril. Here it becomes red light and descends the right channel to enter the left channel at the dan-tien [four finger widths below the navel]; then, still as red light, it ascends the left channel to exit the left nostril as dark smoky light.
2. Visualize white light enter the left nostril. Here it becomes red light and descends the left channel to enter the right channel at the dan-tien; then, still as red light, it ascends the right channel to exit the right nostril as dark smoky light.
3. Visualize white light simultaneously enter both nostrils, transform into red light, descend down both side channels and enter the central channel at the dan-tien, ascend to the top, then return to dan-tien to enter both side channels, exiting as dark smoky light at both nostrils. Note: The central channel at the throat opens into the top of the head like a trumpet.
4. Breathe in through left nostril and out at the right (as in 2).
5. Breathe in through right nostril and out at the left (as in 1).
6. Breathe in and out through both nostrils (as in 3).
7. Breathe in and out through both nostrils (as in 3).
8. Breathe in through right nostril and out at the left (as in 1).
9. Breathe in through left nostril and out at the right (as in 2).

the entering of white light through both the right and left channels, its moving up the middle channel until it reaches the top, coming down again, and finally exiting through the channels on both sides. These three different methods of breathing are the three basic rounds. By permuting these three methods — the first three rounds begin with inhalation through the right channel, the second three rounds begin with inhalation through the left channel, and the third three rounds begin with inhalation through both channels — one will have completed the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise.

As I have explained before, the white light transforms into a swirling red light after entering into the body and then exits as a black vapor when leaving the body. This indicates that the pure white light of wisdom energy enters into one's body through the right nostril and moves around once to purge the karmic traces [subtle energy distortions] through the left nostril. Next the white light goes in the left nostril and out the right nostril. This is followed by inhalation of white light through both nostrils. This sequence constitutes the first three rounds. In the next three rounds, one performs the inhalation through the left nostril first, followed by the right channel, then both channels. For the final three round sequence, inhalation through both channels simultaneously is performed first, followed by the right channel, then the left channel.

I have previously described the visualization of the three subtle energy channels: middle, left, and right, and that they converge at a spot that is four finger-widths below the navel. The right channel extends all the way to the right nostril, while the left channel extends all the way to the left nostril. The middle channel extends all the way up to the throat chakra, then opens up to the skull which is sealed at the crown.

What is the inner significance of the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise? It helps the mind achieve true concentration. During visualization or meditation, one's mind is often complicated and confused by all kinds of extraneous thoughts. In order to eliminate these disruptive thoughts, Tantrayana teaches the method of using "a single thought stop-

ping other thoughts.” The Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise directs the mind to cut through conceptual elaboration. This is a Tantric technique which is also known as visualization — the mind is engaged in pure thoughts in order to transcend irrelevant and disruptive mental projections. If one is already quite skillful and is able to immediately enter Samadhi just by sitting down, then one does not have to do the Nine Round Breath Exercise. However, most people are not able to enter into Samadhi right away!

As soon as one sits down, one is deluged by these thoughts, such as, “Ah! My mother is coming to visit me! [audience laughter] My father is sick! My daughter wants money from me! What kind of car should I buy? To whom do I owe this debt? Who still owes me money and how much does he owe me?” One’s mind starts wandering around. In such a frame of mind, even if one could sit still for ten days straight, one would not have accomplished anything, as one’s imagination has run away! In such a case, one might as well go and take a nap — at least one feels refreshed afterwards! [laughter]

Therefore, in general, the worst thing that can happen during Samadhi is that one enters into a state of an endless succession of disruptive thoughts. Many people have written to me describing how they were not able to stop their distracted thoughts. My answer to them is to practice the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise! One needs to employ visualization to stop other thoughts! One needs to use “thoughts on breathing” to completely eliminate other distracted thoughts. This is a technique to bring the mind into focus!

When one is doing the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise, one is alternating the order of breathing through one’s right nostril, left nostril, and both nostrils, in three separate groupings. What is the purpose for these seemingly tedious procedures? The purpose is to regulate and coordinate both the breath and consciousness, and this is what develops inner focus and stability! This principle [of synchronizing breath and mind] is quite simple. However, if one just sits there and does not do the exercise then, as soon as one begins, one will

be overwhelmed by all kinds of distracted thoughts, such as, “Oh! My mother is coming! My father is coming! What does my daughter want from me! Who owes me money? To whom do I owe money? With whom did I have an altercation today? I argued with my boss today!” While mulling over these distractions, half a day is gone, and one can’t even remember why one is sitting there! [audience laughter] One is supposed to have entered into Samadhi!

Therefore, at the beginning, one needs to put some honest effort into the practice of the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise to regulate the mind. At least during the period of time when one is doing the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise, there will be no distracted thoughts, for one will be concentrating on how the breath travels, how it reaches the top of the skull, and how it is reflected back to travel down again, exiting the nostrils after ascending through the two side channels.

Seed Syllable Visualization Method

An even more brilliant method would be to visualize the source of the white light. I also have discussed this before — the white light can be imagined as originating from one’s altar, the Dharma realm, or the mandala of the Personal Deity. For example, if one has hung a *tangka* before one, then the white light can be visualized emanating from the *tangka*! If one has hung a mandala of the *vajradhatu* or *garbadhatu*, a representation of the Dharma realm, then such a mandala can serve as a source of the Personal Deity’s luminosity. A more subtle technique is to visualize the light emerging from the nostril(s) of one’s Personal Deity. This is the key to the Zen saying, “The Buddha and I breathe out through the same nostril.”

A still more advanced form of this practice is to visualize a seed syllable emerging as the breath of the deity. Let us consider how this would be applied in the practice of *Amita-bha Deity Yoga*. In this case it would be the seed syllable “hri”

which is radiating a red light. It flies out of Amitabha's right nostril and enters through one's own right nostril, to make a circuit through one's body before exiting through the other nostril to return to the nostril of Amitabha. After this circuit, or round, another "hri" emerges from the left nostril of the Buddha and enters into one's left nostril. It makes its circuit and then flies out to re-enter the right nostril of Amitabha. Next, two seed syllables emerge simultaneously from both the left and right nostrils of Amitabha. They simultaneously enter one's left and right nostrils and descend the side channels to rise up the central channel to swirl to the top of the skull where there is no exit. From there they descend the middle channel to re-enter the two side channels to exit through one's two nostrils and return to the two nostrils of Amitabha. Is not this visualization more intricate and subtle? One visualizes the seed syllable, its color, as well as the nose and nostrils of Amitabha. Thus one invokes the original Buddha Nature of the Personal Deity to intermingle with one's own original Buddha Nature. Both Buddha and practitioner are one in essence, and both inhale and exhale the same breath. The Buddha's breath enters into the practitioner's body, and the practitioner's seed of Buddha Nature enters into the body of the Buddha. It is a mutual exchange of breath — this is what "breathing through the same nostril" means.

Thus there is a fundamental correspondence between the practices of Tantra and Zen. This is what "the Buddha and I breathe through the same nostril" means. The Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise is a very profound method. What eventually happens after prolonged practice of this exercise? There won't be just one syllable! One visualizes one seed syllable but, eventually, what emerges from Amitabha will be one hundred or more of these seed syllables and this chain of seed syllables enter one's body. What one breathes out then is also one hundred or more of the "hri" linked together and, one by one, they re-enter the body of Amitabha. At this moment, a most profound insight occurs: the Buddha Nature of Amitabha is that of oneself. The two become unified; and at this

point one's mind becomes extremely stable. One performs this visualization with the white light, red light, and the emerging blue (black) light, and at a further level of sophistication, one visualizes the Nine Round of channel movements, using the seed syllable "hri." Thus the Buddha Nature of Amitabha (the Personal Deity) and oneself will be exchanged through reciprocal movements of the breath.

To Practice is to Do Repentance

The methods of Tantrayana are very profound and oriented towards yogic practices. By comparison, many of Sutrayana's teachings are more theoretical. Realistically speaking, what actual practice methods does Sutrayana teach? The reverends preach, "Go home and chant!" Then one goes to chant. If one wants to deepen one's Buddhist knowledge, they tell one to go read the sutras! Then one goes to read the sutras. Chanting and reading the sutras are what they teach. Otherwise, they engage in some morning and evening rituals, such as striking the wooden fish [a percussion instrument that accompanies chanting], knock, knock, knock... [audience laughter] Or else, they recite some repentance liturgies together, such as those of Amitabha, the Lotus Sutra, the Medicine Buddha, the Great Compassion Dharani, or the Ksitigarba Bodhisattva Repentance, among some others.

What are repentance liturgies? They are, in essence, the equivalent of the Great Homage. To bow is to do repentance. Therefore, in Sutrayana or exoteric schools, one chants the sutra and bows to the Buddhas to perform the liturgy. This is valid and meritorious, but one needs to know the deep meaning of the sutras one is reading and the kind of repentance liturgy being performed. Does one know that the purpose of the repentance liturgies is to teach one to become purified in body, speech, and mind? How many non-virtuous deeds has one's body committed? How many non-virtuous speeches has one uttered? How many non-virtuous thoughts has one had? One needs to repent for all of these transgressions committed

by the body, speech, and mind! How many transgressions have the body, speech, and mind committed? All these transgressions are chanted aloud and consciously acknowledged and purified through bowing in the repentance liturgy.

Actually, when one is doing the daily True Buddha Tantric practice, one is also doing repentance or purification. The Tantric practice is, in reality, a repentance practice. I have described before that it is a means of purifying one's body, speech, and mind. To concentrate the mind on virtuous archetypes is to purify the mind. When one forms the mudras, one's body cannot engage in non-virtuous deeds, hence one is purifying one's body karma. When one chants the mantra, one cannot also scold, slander, lie, flirt, gossip, or engage in double-talk, so one is purifying one's speech. Thus, during ritual practice the practitioner effectively purifies and transforms the faculties of action, expression, and intuition! This is repentance. In Sutrayana's repentance liturgies, one finds out what one has done wrong through the chanting of the sutras, and one bows to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and repents. It achieves the same goal as the Tantric daily practice. Therefore, all Buddhist schools, be they Sutric or Tantric, share the same fundamental orientation.

The Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise is a focusing technique. To unify all mental activities into a single point, one-pointed mindfulness of the breath is employed to stop all other thoughts. The mind is purified when one visualizes the entering of white light, exiting of black vapor, the presence of red light inside the body, the mantra syllable of Buddha Nature flying into one's body, flying out to enter the Buddha's body and then re-entering one's own body. This system of exchange is also a process of purification of the body. It enhances the revelation of the Buddha Nature in one by purifying the body, speech, and mind. This is the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise. What is the Buddha Breath? Buddha Breath is the inhalation and exhalation of the Buddha. The mutual exchange of inhalation and exhalation between oneself and the Buddha is the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise.

The Visualization of the Merging of Self and Deity

When one completes the Nine Round Buddha Breath Exercise, one's body, speech, and mind will be purified and, at this point, one is ready for the next step, "the merging of self and one's Personal Deity." The visualization of "merging of self and the Personal Deity" is very important. At this moment, the Deity before and above oneself in space (Amitabha in this case) flies and alights on the center of one's crown. Standing atop one's crown, Amitabha transforms instantaneously into a sparkling light the size of a rice grain. At the energy center of the heart, the petals of a lotus open up and in the center of the lotus is a moon disc bearing the seed syllable "hri." This "hri" embodies one's Buddha Nature. Visualize Amitabha descending the middle channel until he reaches the lotus at the heart and stands at the center of the moon disc.

Many students have made the following statement related to this visualization: Grand Master, since Amitabha is standing up before and after entering my middle channel, while I am sitting down, I have trouble visualizing the merging of the two. [audience laughter] These students wonder if Amitabha should be standing up or sitting down. Some people have these concerns and they are legitimate concerns. This is how I solved this problem. There is a painting of Amitabha inside the entrance of my residence [at the True Buddha Tantric Quarter] which depicts a standing Amitabha. I often meditate on that particular image of Amitabha because it is so vivid. This Amitabha has a full and perfect face and body and wears a celestial layered garment. As it is a splendidly colorful painting, the image one visualizes is automatically in color. I visualize this standing Amitabha alight on my crown and contract to a miniature size. He then enters my middle channel and, throughout this time, Amitabha remains in a standing pose. However, when Amitabha reaches the moon disc at the lotus of the heart chakra, I visualize him sitting down in a full lotus