

## **Kalachakra Tantra Notes**

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Few notes I took during the Kalachakra teachings given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Graz city from October 15th to 23<sup>rd</sup> 2002:

The Kalachakra initiation was structured into two parts:

1. Preliminaries
2. Actual initiation

Preliminaries here refers to sutra practices which are mainly contained in the three principle aspects of the path of Sutra-yana, namely

1. Renunciation
2. Bodhicitta
3. Wisdom realising ultimate reality

The preliminary practices are also known as "Paramita-yana path" or "common Lamrim practices". Preliminaries are common for both sutra and mantra practitioners. Preliminary practices are also understood as fundamental practices because sutra practices are the fundamental practices of Mantra.

There is a saying in Tibetan: "The richness of thud (Tibetan cheese cake) is given because there is butter in it, without adding butter thud would simply become a bunch of dried cheese. The richness of mantra is given due to its foundation of sutra. Without sutra, tantra becomes a mere sound like HUM HUM PHAD PHAD."

Therefore sutra is the essence needed for the practice of tantra. A solid foundation of sutra supports tantric techniques to become significant for dharma practitioners. The combination of Buddhist sutra and general tantric techniques could bring one to enlightenment rapidly. The core function of mere tantra is to enable one to utilize ones innate or primordial mind as an instrument for the realisation of the three principle aspects of the path. For this purpose, deity yoga can be a very helpful method to ripen our subtle mind and body and transform them into the path to enlightenment.

The basic method for the practices of sutra and tantra is the combination of calm abiding and special insight meditation. Combining the practices of "Shi-ne" and "Lhak-thong" can bring the mind of compassion to a limitless progress. Eventually, the union of bodhicitta (altruistic mind) and the wisdom realising ultimate reality combined with the innate mind of clear light, become the actual lineage that reaches the state of enlightenment. Therefore tantra represents the lineage of the Buddha, "Gyud" in Tibetan, which is the union of bodhicitta and the wisdom of innate clear light, being an indispensable condition for the achievement of the omniscient state.

Regarding the realisation of renunciation, bodhicitta and the wisdom realising emptiness, there are no differences between sutra and tantra. The only difference lays in the subjective mind which realises renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness. The sutra aspect only deals with the gross, luminous and cognitive mind and tantra works with the subtle

mind of innate clear light.

There are four classes of tantra, defined by the levels of penetration to the vital points and their utilisation as instruments for the transformation of the innate mind as the path, through experiencing the physically related spontaneous bliss of emptiness. Here His Holiness was talking about the highest class of tantra which is the fourth: "Anutara Yoga Tantra". The other three tantras are: "Kiryā Tantra", "Charya Tantra" and "Yoga Tantra". In English they can be defined as "Action Lineage", "Behaviour Lineage" and "Union Lineage". The "Anutara Yoga Tantra" could be called "Highest Union Lineage" in English.

During the first three days of this Kalachakra event, His Holiness taught basic Buddhist theory and practices as preliminary teachings based on the following scriptures:

"Middle length of Stages of the path" by Kamala-shila, ( Gom-Rim )

"Lamp of the path" by Atisha ( Lam-Rim) and

"Thirty Seven practices of a Bodhisattva" by Thokme Sangpo.

His Holiness explained basic Buddhist principles and the corresponding theory in an extraordinarily unique way by integrating the approaches of all three sources...very inspiring!

His Holiness used the fourth day to conclude the preliminary teachings and to prepare the disciples for the initiation. That day His Holiness explained to the audience that those who had just come to Graz for the initiation and did not turn up for the preliminary teachings were more smart than him. The reason for this being that he usually announces the Kalachakra initiation merely for the purpose of gathering people and when they are there, he mainly focuses on the introduction of basic Buddhist theory and practices rather than the Kalachakra initiation itself. His Holiness also said that his interpretation of the fact that there were people doing the initiation only was, that they already had the knowledge of the preliminary practices. Of course, His Holiness meant this statement to be a bit of a joke but there is also truth behind it! The point he was making was, that without having the realisation of the three principle aspects of the sutra path, and by simply meditating on the so called deity yoga or tantrism, enlightenment will not be reached. In the contrary, this kind of practice could cause one to abide in samsara even longer and to develop an egoistic attitude.

The common preliminary practices are suitable for all levels and all kinds of practitioners, even for those who simply want to learn about Buddhism. But the initiation itself is intended for qualified disciples and they are very rare. While His Holiness was conferring the initiation, he said in a very humble tone: "I have the minimum of minimum qualification to be an initiation master and to confer the Kalachakra initiation".

Furthermore he added that in the case of Tilopa and Naropa there was no need to perform all these complicated and long rituals in order to give the Kalachakra Initiation. His Holiness also stated: "In our case, I myself and we all need to prepare according to the scriptures." In addition, His Holiness explained that the heights of thrones in the world of Tibetan Buddhism does not correspond to the levels of inner realisations but they simply stand for the social level in the hierarchy.

A detailed explanation quoted from the book "Kindness, Clarity and Insight" by His Holiness the Dalai Lama: "If the (Bodhisattva) vows are taken and the practice of the six perfections is going well, it is then possible to receive the initiation and to engage in the practice of mantra (tantra). This is the fully qualified mode of procedure that is set forth in the great books, undertaken when there is time and opportunity to progress in this way. Otherwise, as is now the widespread custom, when you have some understanding of the three principle aspects of path, the determination to be freed from cyclic existence, the altruistic intention to become enlightened and the correct view of emptiness, and are making great effort at developing these attitudes, it becomes possible to enter the practice of mantra. However, if you do not have the understanding of the three principle aspects of the path, do not have faith from the depths of your heart in the Three Jewels, and so forth, it would be extremely difficult to say that you have actually attained mantric initiation even if you have attended a ceremony."

If somebody asked where Shambhala land was, His Holinesses' answer would be: "Hum!..." The only thing left is to say "mysterious". The Dalai Lama manifested as a simple master, transmitting Buddhism in a practical way to people in the world. He never pretended to be himself an omniscient person. Even though many millions of people undoubtedly believe that he is an emanation of Avaloketisvara, the Buddha of Compassion in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

About how to rely on a spiritual guide, His Holiness advised as follows: in the beginning one can listen to Dharma teachings from a teacher, considering him a spiritual friend (in Tibetan "cho-drok") and not necessarily a dharma teacher yet (lama or guru). Later, when one is convinced that he or she is qualified to be ones teacher, then one can consider him to be ones dharma teacher. But once the teachings have been listened to with the attitude of considering him or her as ones dharma teacher, then one should not lose faith towards him or her. This is the essence of the practice of guru devotion, which is the very basis of the spiritual path to enlightenment.

Concerning the recognition of the Kalachakra deity, His Holiness said, that one should not think of the Kalachakra deity as an individual and independent deity with many heads, many legs and many arms. The Kalachakra deity is simply an aspect of realisation, especially symbolizing the aspect of the wisdom realising emptiness, the wisdom of ones own innate mind appearing as the deity. Therefore the Kalachakra deity is an aspect of the innate mind of realisation, of the indivisible oneness of method and wisdom realising emptiness as one notion, as a different identity. The appearance of the wisdom realising emptiness as the deity should be the mind of innate clear light. The deity yoga in this form stands for the realisation of emptiness and compassion.

The aspect of the deity is explained in "Kindness, Clarity and Insight" by His Holiness the Dalai Lama: "Deities in Mandalas are supramundane ones who have reached the path of no more learning and are Buddhas. In Yoga Tantra, for instance, there are mandalas with even a thousand deities who are the appearance of the one central deity. In the Highest Yoga Tantra mandala of Guhyasamaja there are thirty-two deities which are appearances of the factor of purification of the constituents of one person. Thus, even though many

deities appear in the mandala, there is really only one being.

Deity yoga is practiced for the main purpose of achieving the supreme goal of Buddhahood in order to be of full service to others sentient beings. In general, the tantric path is comprised of the yoga of the non-duality of the profound and the manifest. The profound is the wisdom realising the profound emptiness of inherent existence, and the manifest is the simultaneous manifestation of that wisdom consciousness as a divine circle. The appearance factor of the consciousness manifests as deity, mandala dwelling, and so forth, and the ascertainment factor of that same consciousness realises the absence of inherent existence of those."

Concerning the distinguishing characteristics of highest yoga tantra techniques, His Holiness taught: The uncommon significance of highest yoga tantra is taking the innate clear light as the path to enlightenment. Utilising the innate mind as the path to enlightenment. A complete method and compassion are able to raise from the innate mind, that is called omniscience.

It is a quick path working through the connection to the vital points of channels, wind and drops.

The uncommon practice in mother tantra leads to the rainbow body.

The uncommon practice of father tantra leads to the illusory body.

The uncommon practice of Kalachakra tantra is the empty form.

To describe what Enlightenment is, His Holiness quoted from the "Tantra of Names of Manjushri":

"Buddha has no beginning, nor end. The primordial Buddha has no cause".

And from Naga-bhodi's analyses on ending of karma;

"When temporary minds become oneness or are not able to manifest anymore, when they are extinct from the primordial mind, that is the state of Buddha-hood". Meaning that, they are residing permanently in clear light just like clouds raising from the sky, finally disappear into sky and waves appearing from the ocean disappear into ocean again.

About the method of approaching an ecumenical aspect in Buddhism, His Holiness quoted from

"Tantra of manjushri's name":

"Different means of diverse vehicles".

The numberless vehicles and methods could help in many different ways to fulfill the diverse mental capacities of sentient beings. In this regard, one can develop admiration towards all kinds of religions by recognizing all religions as methods and means to serve and feed different mental dispositions of the human mind.

About the meaning of deity yoga retreat, His Holiness explained:

In Tibetan "Gompei kyona deipa byed" means :

While in retreat if one becomes reluctant in meditating then one should recite mantras.

The actual deity retreat is not about reciting and counting mantras but it is about meditating on the three principle aspects of path by using deity yoga. Also retreat (in Tibetan "Nyen-pa") means to get closer. Often people understand "getting closer" to the deity as seeing the deity as an independently existing and individual protector deity. His

Holiness says that this concept is wrong... this kind of retreat could create an even stronger egocentric attitude and stress. Therefore he prefers "Nyen-pa", in the context of getting closer to Buddha-hood, enlightenment or the omniscient mind. He said that many people in retreat just count mantras and when they get tired the only thing left is to take a break! With this style of retreat no real "Nyen-pa" is taking place!

On the last day of the event a long live puja for His Holiness with tsog offering was held. This time His Holiness performed the tsog puja with bread only and without wine and meat. Usually most lamas believe that a tsog ceremony must have three substances: some kind of bread, wine and meat, which is very similar to the way of performing a Christian mass. This time, His Holinesses' wise, skilful manner and his non-dogmatic approach and great knowledge gave a fantastic lesson about how to perform a non-alcoholic and vegetarian Tsog!

To conclude the event, His Holiness said, that the core practice of all of Buddha's teachings, bodhicitta and the view of emptiness, should be emphasized within oneself with the motivation of really developing them within oneself. If one practices such means using them as a practical help in some critical situation, one can then feel that dharma helps to solve problems. Otherwise if one does not apply the teachings and even if one meditates on deity yoga, when one has a headache one feels pain in the head, when one has a stomach ache one feels the pain in the stomach in the same way. Therefore, one then might assume that deity yoga does not help to solve problems. One should put effort in meditating on bodhicitta and the view of emptiness which practically help to solve problems and to reduce them in any critical moment of life!

I dedicate this note to the clarification of some questions that are often asked by tantric initiation participants. May this also be of benefit for many other sentient beings and meet their wishes.