

## Introduction to Reading Material for Module 23

October 17, 2018

For this module that examines a recent work by Pema Chodron, it feels wise for people to encounter some of her sources that she's adapted for us.

The first two parts, concerning the vows of Hinayana and Mahayana, reveal her familiarity with Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, a classic text in the Tibetan tradition. I have selected texts that she refers to directly or clearly has informed her presentation.

It may seem that these verse passages are short, but we must recognize that each stanza has been included in many commentaries by Tibetan lineage holders, and reading these slowly and contemplating them

In the third part we encounter some talks by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche who was Pema's first teacher – as well as those who lead our weekly group discussions. Here are two talks from an early set of lectures given at Naropa that are available in book form as *Journey Without Goal*. These two talks, "Vajra Nature" and "Mandala" give insight into the departures of Vajrayana Buddhism from the previous two "yanas". They will help complete the material Pema covers and give a sense of the atmospherics of Vajrayana.

Joseph Crane

~~27. I am as if benumbed by misery,  
 My mind reduced to total impotence  
 With no perception of the madness overwhirling me.  
 What is it that has me in its grip?~~

28. Anger, lust—these enemies of mine—  
 Are limbless and devoid of faculties.  
 They have no bravery, no cleverness;  
 How then have they reduced me to such slavery?

29. I it is who welcome them within my heart,  
 Allowing them to harm me at their pleasure!  
 I who suffer all without resentment—  
 Thus my abject patience, all displaced!

30. If all the gods and demigods besides  
 Together came against me as my foes,  
 Their mighty strength—all this would not avail  
 To fling me in the fires of deepest hell.

31. And yet, the mighty fiend of my afflictions,  
 Flings me in an instant headlong down  
 To where the mighty lord of mountains<sup>45</sup>  
 Would be burned, its very ashes all consumed.

32. No other enemy indeed  
 Has lived so long as my defiled emotions—  
 O my enemy, afflictive passion,  
 Endless and beginningless companion!

33. All other foes that I appease and wait upon  
 Will show me favors, give me every aid,  
 But should I serve my dark defiled emotions,  
 They will only harm me, draw me down to grief.

34. Therefore, if these long-lived, ancient enemies of mine,  
 The wellspring only of increasing woe,  
 Can find their lodging safe within my heart,  
 What joy or peace in this world can be found?

35. And if the jail guards of the prisons of saṃsāra,  
 The butchers and tormentors of infernal realms,  
 All lurk within me in the web of craving,  
 What joy can ever be my destiny?

36. I will not leave the fight until, before my eyes,  
 These enemies of mine are all destroyed.  
 For if, aroused to fury by the merest slight,  
 Incapable of sleep until the scores are settled,

37. Foolish rivals, both to suffer when they die,  
 Will draw the battle lines and do their best to win,  
 And careless of the pain of cut and thrust,  
 Will stand their ground, refusing to give way,

38. No need to say that I will not lose heart,  
 Regardless of the hardships of the fray.  
 These natural foes today I'll strive to crush—  
 These enemies, the source of all my pain.

39. The wounds inflicted by the enemy in futile wars  
 Are flaunted by the soldier as a trophy.  
 So in the high endeavor for so great a prize,  
 Why should hurt and injury dismay me?

40. When fishers, butchers, farmers, and the like,  
 Intending just to gain their livelihood,  
 Will suffer all the miseries of heat and cold,  
 How can I not bear the same to gain the happiness of beings?

41. When I pledged myself to free from their affliction  
Beings who abide in every region,  
Stretching to the limits of the sky,  
I myself was subject to the same afflictions.
42. Thus I did not have the measure of my strength—  
To speak like this was clear insanity.  
More reason, then, for never drawing back,  
Abandoning the fight against defiled confusion.<sup>46</sup>
43. This shall be my all-consuming passion;  
Filled with rancor I will wage my war!  
Though this emotion seems to be defiled,  
It halts defilement and shall not be spurned.
44. Better if I perish in the fire,  
Better that my head be severed from my body  
Than ever I should serve or reverence  
My mortal foes, defiled emotions.
45. Common enemies, when driven from the state,  
Retreat and base themselves in other lands,  
And muster all their strength the better to return.  
But our afflictions are without such stratagems.
46. Defiled emotions, scattered by the eye of wisdom!  
Where will you now run, when driven from my mind?  
Whence would you return to do me harm?  
But oh—my mind is feeble. I am indolent!
47. And yet defilements are not in the object,  
Nor yet within the faculties, nor somewhere in between.  
And if not elsewhere, where is their abode  
Whence they might wreak their havoc on the world?  
They are simple mirages, and so—take heart!  
Banish all your fear and strive to know their nature.  
Why suffer needlessly the pains of hell?
48. This is how I should reflect and labor,  
Taking up the precepts just set forth.  
What invalid in need of medicine  
Ignored his doctor's words and gained his health?



48. When the urge arises in the mind  
To feelings of desire or wrathful hate,  
Do not act! Be silent, do not speak!  
And like a log of wood be sure to stay.
49. When the mind is wild with mockery  
And filled with pride and haughty arrogance,  
And when you want to show the hidden faults of others,  
To bring up old dissensions or to act deceitfully,
50. And when you want to fish for praise,  
Or criticize and spoil another's name,  
Or use harsh language, sparring for a fight,  
It's then that like a log you should remain.
51. And when you yearn for wealth, attention, fame,  
A circle of admirers serving you,  
And when you look for honors, recognition—  
It's then that like a log you should remain.
52. And when you want to do another down  
And cultivate advantage for yourself,  
And when the wish to gossip comes to you,  
It's then that like a log you should remain.
53. Impatience, indolence, faint heartedness,  
And likewise haughty speech and insolence,  
Attachment to your side—when these arise,  
It's then that like a log you should remain.
54. Examine thus yourself from every side.  
Note harmful thoughts and every futile striving.  
Thus it is that heroes in the bodhisattva path  
Apply the remedies to keep a steady mind.





## Meditation

1. After cultivating diligence,  
Set your mind to concentrate.  
For those whose minds are slack and wandering  
Are caught between the fangs of the afflictions.
2. In solitude, the mind and body  
Are not troubled by distraction.  
Therefore, leave this worldly life  
And totally abandon mental wandering.
3. Because of loved ones and desire for gain,  
Disgust with worldly life does not arise.  
These, then, are the first things to renounce.  
Such are the reflections of a prudent man.
4. Penetrative insight joined with calm abiding  
Utterly eradicates afflicted states.  
Knowing this, first search for calm abiding,  
Found by those who joyfully renounce the world.
5. Beings, brief, ephemeral,  
Who fiercely cling to what is also passing,  
Will catch no glimpse of happiness  
For many thousands of their future lives.
6. And thus their minds will have no joy  
And therefore will not rest in equanimity.  
But even if they taste it, they are not content—  
And as before, the pain of longing stays.
7. If I long and crave for other beings,  
A veil is cast upon the perfect truth.  
Wholesome disillusion<sup>86</sup> melts away,  
And finally there comes the sting of pain.
8. My thoughts are all for them . . .  
And by degrees my life is frittered by.  
My family and friends all fade and pass, for whom  
The Doctrine is destroyed that leads to indestructibility.
9. For if I act like those who are like children,  
Sure it is that I shall fall to lower states.  
So why keep company with infants  
And go with them in ways so far from virtue?
10. One moment friends,  
The next, they're bitter enemies.  
Even pleasant things arouse their discontent:  
Worldly people—hard it is to please them!
11. A beneficial word and they resent it,  
While all they do is turn me from the good.  
And if to what they say I close my ears,  
Their anger burns, the cause of lower states.
12. Jealous of superiors, they vie with equals,  
Proud to those below, they strut when praised.  
Say something untoward, they seethe with rage:  
What good was ever had from childish folk?

13. Keep company with them and what will follow?  
Self-aggrandizement and scorn for others,  
Talk about the "good things" of saṃsāra—  
Every kind of vice is sure to come.
14. Only ruin can result  
From links like these, between yourself and others.  
For they will bring no benefit to you,  
And you in turn can bring them nothing good.
15. Therefore flee the company of childish people.  
Greet them, when you meet, with smiles  
That keep on terms of pleasant courtesy,  
While not inviting close familiarity.
16. Like bees that get their honey from the flowers,  
Take only what is consonant with Dharma.  
Treat them like first-time acquaintances,  
Without encouraging a close relationship.
17. "Oh, I am rich, surrounded by attention,  
I have so much, and life is wonderful!"  
Nourish such complacency and later,  
After death, your fears will start!
18. Indeed, O foolish and afflicted mind,  
You want, you crave for everything,  
This "everything" will grow and turn  
To suffering increased a thousandfold.
19. Since this is so, the wise man does not crave,  
For from such craving fear and anguish come.  
And fix this firmly in your understanding:  
All that may be wished for will by nature fade to nothing.
20. For people may have gained a wealth of riches,  
Enjoying reputation, sweet renown.  
But who can say where they have gone to now,  
With all the baggage of their gold and fame?
21. Why should I be pleased when people praise me?  
Others there will be who scorn and criticize.  
And why despondent when I'm blamed,  
Since there'll be others who think well of me?
22. So many are the wants and tendencies of beings,  
Even Buddha could not please them all—  
Of such an evil man as me no need to speak!  
Better to give up such worldly thoughts.
23. People scorn the poor who have no wealth,  
They also criticize the rich who have it.  
What pleasure can derive from keeping company  
With people such as these, so difficult to please?
24. Unless they have their way in everything,  
These children are bereft of happiness.  
And so, shun friendship with the childish,  
Thus the Tathāgata has declared.
25. In woodlands, haunt of stag and bird,  
Among the trees where no dissension jars,  
It's there I would keep pleasant company!  
When might I be off to make my dwelling there?
26. When shall I depart to make my home  
In cave or empty shrine or under spreading tree,  
With, in my breast, a free, unfettered heart,  
Which never turns to cast a backward glance?



76. Some completely sell themselves,  
No longer free, in slavery to others.  
And, destitute, their wives give birth  
With only trees for shelter, in the wilderness.

77. Fools ensnared by craving for a livelihood  
Decide that they will make their fortune  
In the wars, though fearful for their lives.  
And seeking gain, it's slavery they get.

78. Some, as fruits of their ambition,  
Have their bodies slashed, impaled on pointed stakes.  
Some are wounded, run through by the lance,  
While some are put to death by fire.

79. The trouble guarding what we have, the pain of losing all!  
See the endless hardships brought on us by wealth!  
Those distracted by their love of riches  
Never have a moment's rest from sorrows of existence.

80. They indeed, possessed of many wants,  
Will suffer many troubles, all for very little:  
Mouthfuls of the hay the oxen get  
As recompense for having pulled the cart!

81. The cattle's fodder!—not so very rare—  
And for the sake of such a petty thing,  
Tormented by their karma they destroy  
This precious human life so hard to find.

82. All that we desire is sure to perish,  
And afterwards we fall to hellish torment.  
The constant, minor troubles we endure  
Are all for what amounts to very little!

73. Some are miserable as well as lustful.  
For worn out by their day-long work,  
They go home broken with fatigue,  
To sleep the slumbers of a corpse!

74. Some, obliged to travel far abroad,  
Must suffer separation from their wives,  
From children whom they love and long to see.  
They do not meet with them for years on end.

75. Some, ambitious for advancement,  
Not knowing how to get it, sell themselves.  
Happiness eludes their grasp, and pointlessly  
They live, in bondage to their masters.





## Commitment

1. With joy I celebrate  
The virtue that relieves all beings  
From the sorrows of the states of loss,<sup>37</sup>  
And places those who languish in the realms of bliss.
2. And I rejoice in virtue that creates the cause  
Of gaining the enlightened state,  
And celebrate the freedom won  
By living beings from the round of pain.
3. And in the buddhahood of the protectors I delight  
And in the stages<sup>38</sup> of the buddhas' offspring.
4. The intention, ocean of great good,  
That seeks to place all beings in the state of bliss,  
And every action for the benefit of all:  
Such is my delight and all my joy.
5. And so I join my hands and pray  
The buddhas who reside in every quarter:  
Kindle now the Dharmā's light  
For those who grope, bewildered, in the dark of suffering!



6. I join my hands, beseeching the enlightened ones  
Who wish to pass beyond the bonds of sorrow:  
Do not leave us in our ignorance;  
Remain among us for unnumbered ages!
7. And through these actions now performed,<sup>39</sup>  
By all the virtue I have just amassed,  
May all the pain of every living being  
Be wholly scattered and destroyed!
8. For all those ailing in the world,  
Until their every sickness has been healed,  
May I myself become for them  
The doctor, nurse, the medicine itself.
9. Raining down a flood of food and drink,  
May I dispel the ills of thirst and famine.  
And in the ages marked by scarcity and want,<sup>40</sup>  
May I myself appear as drink and sustenance.
10. For sentient beings, poor and destitute,  
May I become a treasure ever plentiful,  
And lie before them closely in their reach,  
A varied source of all that they might need.
11. My body, thus, and all my goods besides,  
And all my merits gained and to be gained,  
I give them all away withholding nothing  
To bring about the benefit of beings.
12. Nirvāna is attained by giving all,  
Nirvāna the objective of my striving.  
Everything therefore must be abandoned,  
And it is best to give it all to others.
13. This body I have given up  
To serve the pleasure of all living beings.  
Let them kill and beat and slander it,  
And do to it whatever they desire.
14. And though they treat it like a toy,  
Or make of it the butt of every mockery,  
My body has been given up to them—  
There's no use, now, to make so much of it.
15. And so let beings do to me  
Whatever does not bring them injury.  
Whenever they catch sight of me,  
Let this not fail to bring them benefit.
16. If those who see me entertain  
A thought of anger or devotion,  
May these states supply the cause  
Whereby their good and wishes are fulfilled.
17. All those who slight me to my face,  
Or do me any other evil,  
Even if they blame or slander me,  
May they attain the fortune of enlightenment!
18. May I be a guard for those who are protectorless,  
A guide for those who journey on the road.  
For those who wish to go across the water,  
May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.
19. May I be an isle for those who yearn for landfall,  
And a lamp for those who long for light;  
For those who need a resting place, a bed;  
For all who need a servant, may I be their slave.
20. May I be the wishing jewel, the vase of plenty,  
A word of power and the supreme healing;  
May I be the tree of miracles,  
And for every being the abundant cow.
21. Like the earth and the pervading elements,  
Enduring as the sky itself endures,  
For boundless multitudes of living beings,  
May I be their ground and sustenance.

22. Thus for every thing that lives,  
As far as are the limits of the sky,  
May I provide their livelihood and nourishment  
Until they pass beyond the bonds of suffering.
23. Just as all the buddhas of the past  
Embraced the awakened attitude of mind,  
And in the precepts of the bodhisattvas  
Step by step abode and trained,
24. Just so, and for the benefit of beings,  
I will also have this attitude of mind,  
And in those precepts, step by step,  
I will abide and train myself.
25. That this most pure and spotless state of mind  
Might be embraced and constantly increase,  
The prudent who have cultivated it  
Should praise it highly in such words as these:
26. "Today my life has given fruit.  
This human state has now been well assumed.  
Today I take my birth in Buddha's line,  
And have become the buddhas' child and heir.
27. "In every way, then, I will undertake  
Activities befitting such a rank.  
And I will do no act to mar  
Or compromise this high and flawless lineage.
28. "For I am like a blind man who has found  
A precious gem within a mound of filth.  
Exactly so, as if by some strange chance,  
The enlightened mind has come to birth in me.
29. "This is the draft of immortality,  
That slays the Lord of Death, the slaughterer of beings,  
The rich unfailing treasure-mine  
To heal the poverty of wanderers.
30. "It is the sovereign remedy,  
That perfectly allays all maladies.  
It is the wishing tree bestowing rest  
On those who wander wearily the pathways of existence.
31. "It is the universal vehicle that saves  
All wandering beings from the states of loss—  
The rising moon of the enlightened mind  
That soothes the sorrows born of the afflictions.
32. "It is a mighty sun that utterly dispels  
The gloom and ignorance of wandering beings,  
The creamy butter, rich and full,  
All churned from milk of holy Teaching.
33. "Living beings! Wayfarers upon life's paths,  
Who wish to taste the riches of contentment,  
Here before you is the supreme bliss—  
Here, O ceaseless wanderers, is your fulfillment!
34. "And so, within the sight of all protectors,  
I summon every being, calling them to buddhahood—  
And till that state is reached, to every earthly joy!  
May gods and demigods, and all the rest, rejoice!"



T W O

*Vajra Nature*

THE VAJRAYANA SEEMS to have been widely misunderstood in the West. People have projected a lot of ideas onto it, believing it to be an expression of wildness and freedom. However, the cultivation of vajrayana has to be based on a very subtle, definite, ordinary, and real foundation. Otherwise, we are lost. Not only are we lost, but we are destroying ourselves.

In talking about the tantric tradition, we are not talking about playing with sex or aggression or colors or the phenomenal world. At this point we are simply developing a basic understanding of how tantra works. We have to be very conservative. We have to be very, very concerned with the fundamentals. I could say: "Don't worry. If you worry, that's your problem. If you don't worry, everything is going to be okay. Let's dance together. Let's play music together. Let's drink milk and honey." But that does not work, not at all. Talking about tantra is not such an easy matter.

Working with the energy of vajrayana is like dealing with a live electric wire. We can use switches, gloves, and all sorts of buffers in handling this live wire, but we also have the choice of using our bare hands and touching the live wire directly—in which case we are in trouble. The institution of tantra, not only Buddhist tantra but Hindu tantra as well, has been presented very generously to American students by many competent and great teachers. Still, many students get into trouble. They can't take it. They simply can't take it. They end up destroying them-

selves. They end up playing with the energy until it becomes a spiritual atomic bomb.

We might feel that working with tantra is like planting a little seed: we nourish it, make it germinate and send out shoots of greenery, and finally it will blossom as a beautiful flower. That is wishful thinking. We cannot approach tantra in that way. Instead, we have to realize that taking care of such a plant is not ordinary gardening. An extraordinary process is needed. Dealing with our state of being, our state of mind, is extraordinary in many ways. Moreover, dealing with our state of mind from the subtle tantra point of view is extremely dangerous—highly dangerous and equally highly productive. Therefore we should be very careful and open when we talk about vajrayana. Nonexistence is the only preparation for tantra, and we should realize that there is no substitute.

The experience of nonexistence brings a sense of delightful humor and, at the same time, complete openness and freedom. In addition, it brings an experience of complete indestructibility that is unchallengeable, immovable, and completely solid. The experience of indestructibility can only occur when we realize that nonexistence is possible, in the sense of being without reference points, without philosophical definitions, without even the notion of nonexistence.

The development of indestructibility or immovability is extremely important to understand. Such indestructibility can only come out of the state of nothingness, egolessness, or nonexistence. According to the Buddha, tantra is greater liberation, greater discipline, and greater vision. But this greater liberation is based on working with the potentialities and energies that exist within us. Therefore, without having some understanding of nonexistence, there is no point in discussing indestructibility.

When we consider someone to be indestructible, we generally mean that he is well established in his discipline, such as a person who has mastered the art of warfare or studied philosophy in great depth. Because such a person has mastered all sorts of techniques and training, we therefore consider him to be immovable or indestructible. In fact, from the tantra point of view, the attempt to secure oneself with gadgetry is a source of vulnerability rather than indestructibility. In this case, we are not talking about indestructibility based on collecting information, tricks, or ideas. Instead we are referring to a basic attitude of trust in the nonexistence of our being.

In the tantra notion of indestructibility, there is no ground, no basic



premise, and no particular philosophy except one's own experience, which is extremely powerful and dynamic. It is a question of being rather than figuring out what to be, how to be. Usually we rely upon reference points, conceptual ideas, and feedback to give us guidelines as to how to be good or bad boys and girls, but such dependence is questionable. If you say to your doctor, "I have insomnia; how can I fall asleep?" the doctor responds by saying, "Take these pills. Then you will have no problem." In America in particular that approach has become a problem. In tantra, the point is not *how* to handle ourselves, but that we simply have to do it. We cannot trick ourselves into realizing the state of immovability, or indestructibility. Indestructibility is based on our experience, which is solid, dynamic, and unyielding.

In that way, tantra discipline does not cooperate with any deception at all; therefore it is regarded as indestructible, immovable. The tantric approach of nonparticipation in the games that go on in the samsaric world, however, is something more than boycotting. When we boycott something, we do so in the name of a protest. We disagree with certain systems or certain ideas, and therefore we make a nuisance of ourselves. In this case, instead of boycotting the samsaric setup, we are fully and personally involved with it. We realize all the so-called "benefits" that the samsaric world might present to us—spiritual, psychological, and material goods of all kinds. We are fully aware of all the alternatives, but we do not yield to any of them at all. We are straightforward and hardheaded. That is the quality of immovability.

The word *hardheaded* is very interesting. When we say somebody is hardheaded, we mean that he is not taken in by anything. That is precisely what is meant by the term *vajra nature*: hardheadedness, vajra-headedness. Vajra is a quality of toughness and not being taken in by any kind of seduction. We also talk about "hard truth." Such truth is hard, unyielding, and uncomplimentary. When we receive news of someone's death, it is the hard truth. We cannot go back and say that it is not true. We cannot hire an attorney to argue the case or spend our money trying to bring the person back to life, because it is the hard truth. In the same way, vajra nature is hard truth. We cannot challenge or manipulate it in any way at all. It is both direct and precise.

The term *vajra* in Sanskrit, or *dotje* (*rho tje*) in Tibetan, means "having the qualities of a diamond." Like a diamond, vajra is tough and at the same time extremely precious. Unless we understand this basic vajra

quality of tantra, or of the tantrika—this almost bullheaded quality of not yielding to any kind of seductions, to any little tricks or plays on words—we cannot understand vajrayana Buddhism at all.

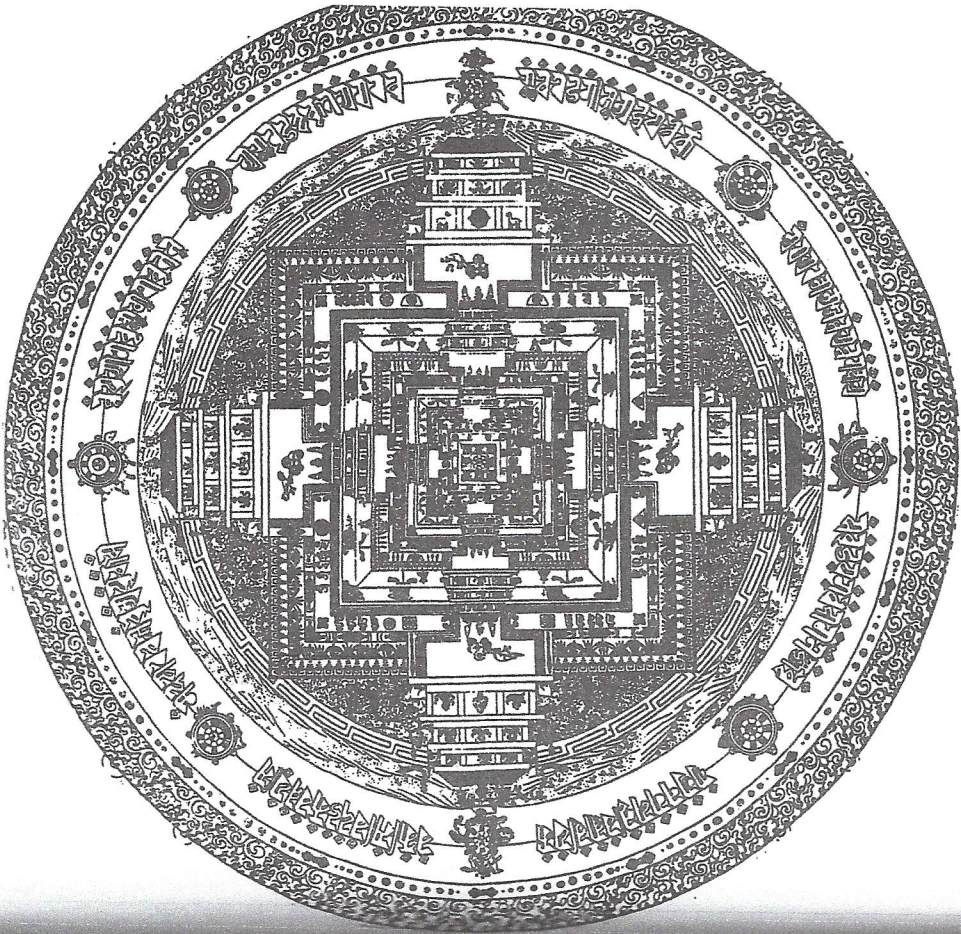
Fundamentally speaking, indestructibility, or vajra nature, is basic sanity. It is the total experience of tantra, the experience of the enlightened state of being. This sanity is based on the experience of clarity, which comes from the practice of meditation. Through the meditation practice of the three yantras we discover a sense of clarity, unconditional clarity. Such clarity is ostentatious and has immense brilliance. It is very joyful and it has potentialities of everything. It is a real experience. Once we have experienced this brilliance, this farseeing, ostentatious, colorful, opulent quality of clarity, then there is no problem. That is vajra nature. It is indestructible. Because of its opulence and its richness, it radiates constantly, and immense, unconditional appreciation takes place. That combination of indestructibility and clarity is the basic premise of tantra Buddhist teachings.

We should understand how the vajrayana notion of brilliance differs from the notion of clear light as described in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and how it differs from the mahayana notion of luminosity. Clear light, according to the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is purely a phenomenological experience. You see whiteness as you die or as your consciousness begins to sink. Because the physical data of your body's habitual patterns are beginning to dissolve, you begin to enter another realm. You feel white-washed, as if you were swimming in milk, or drowning in milk. You feel saturated with whiteness, which is known as clear light. That is purely a phenomenological experience, not the true experience of clarity. On the other hand, the mahayana Buddhists talk about luminosity, called *prahlasvana* in Sanskrit, or *ösel* (*'od gsal*) in Tibetan. *Ösel* means seeing things very precisely, clearly, logically, and skillfully. Everything is seen very directly; things are seen as they are. Nevertheless, neither *prahlasvana* nor the notion of clear light match the tantric notion of vajra clarity.

Vajrayana clarity has more humor. It also has more subtlety and dignity. Moreover, it is utterly, totally outrageous. Things are seen as they are, precisely; but at the same time things are also seeing us precisely. Because we are totally exposed and open and not afraid to be seen, a meeting point occurs. Something makes us realize that we cannot chicken out and say that our life is just a rehearsal. Something makes us



realize that it is real. That state of being is not merely a phenomenological experience. It is a real state of being, a true state of being that is full and complete. That indestructibility and clarity are vajra nature, which is superior to any other approach to spirituality, even within the Buddhist tradition.



*The Mandala of Kalachakra. A two dimensional representation of the mandalas of body, speech, and mind of the Kalachakra Tantra.*

T H R E E

*Mandala*

THERE ARE THREE WORLDS presented in the tantric tradition: the world of perceptions, the world of the body, and the world of emotions. Our relationship with the world of perceptions is called the outer mandala; our relationship with the world of the body is called the inner mandala; and our relationship with the world of emotions is called the secret mandala.

OUTER MANDALA

We are constantly engaged in relationships with the ordinary world, that is, the world of ayatanas or the six sense perceptions: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and thinking; the process which coordinates the other five. In Buddhism thinking is considered to be one of the senses. Our different perceptions are constantly being coordinated into a mandala. By mandala we mean interlocking relationships rather than an extraordinary magical circle. Mandala is simply the coordination of one point with another. For instance, in filmmaking the visual material is edited, and the sound has to be edited as well, so that the two work together.

The same thing happens in everyday life. When we enter a restaurant, we hear the clattering of pots and pans, and we begin to smell the food. At that point we may either get turned on or turned off by the restaurant's mandala. Or someone may introduce a friend to us: "This is



a good friend of mine. I would like you to meet him." We say, "How are you?" and we sit down to talk with that person. That person speaks and behaves in a certain way, and we begin to feel that we like him, either on the grounds of our friend's recommendation or because we feel it is worthwhile to associate with such a person.

Perhaps our car is breaking down and we stop at a gas station. One of the passengers decides to step out and ask the attendant how far it is to the next motel. From the way that person behaves when he brings back the message, we can tell whether the answer is going to be favorable or disappointing. In that way, we always have a feeling about what is taking place.

According to tantra, that feeling, or intuitive setup, is a part of the external world. It is part of an actual relationship. Something is happening, or for that matter, something is not happening. Nevertheless, there is an actual relationship taking place constantly. Our experience of that relationship is not particularly based on superstition. We simply have a personal experience of the whole situation, a sense of the reality of mandala.

The outer mandala principle is the possibility of relating with a situation as a cohesive structure. Some setups are unpleasant, destructive, and unworkable; other setups are creative, workable, and pleasant. Mandalas are the general patterns, whether pleasant or unpleasant, that link us to the rest of the world, which is our world or our creation in any case.

When we begin to work with reality properly, an enormous relationship, a rapport, takes place between us and the external world. That rapport is taking place constantly, some kind of network or system of relations. It is as if something were circulating. For instance, when we are just about to catch the flu, we feel that the world is not particularly favorable to us. Whatever we experience and whatever we feel is somewhat strange. We feel that something is not quite clicking. We feel numb and unhealthy already. The world outside seems too solid, and we cannot relate that solidity to the softness or vulnerability in ourselves. The world seems hardened and heavy, and we cannot seem to make any connection with it. Those are the signs of a fever, an approaching flu. Although they seem to signal a discrepancy in our relationship with the world, that experience itself is an example of mandala principle.

According to the tantric tradition, the outer mandala principle is the external world and how we relate with it. However, the emphasis on

relationship does not mean that the world is regarded as an intuitive or purely subjective world. It is simply the external world. For instance, the outer mandala is connected with how we relate with hot and cold. If we are outdoors in a hot climate and we walk into a highly air-conditioned building, we may get sick because we are not able to handle hot and cold properly. Our coordination with the world may not be quite right.

Usually, we experience such problems when we ignore the relationship between the world outside and our own world, our body. If we do not acknowledge our sense perceptions properly and thoroughly, we find ourselves in trouble—not because *what* we perceive is poisonous, but because *how* we perceive has become incompetent, haphazard, or confused, and therefore it has turned into poison. From that point of view, we cannot say that the phenomenal world we are living in—the traffic jams and the pollution and the inflation—is bad and devilish. We cannot condemn the world or put it into those kinds of conceptual packages. That approach does not work, because it means that we are fighting with our own phenomena.

Phenomena are ours: it is our country, our air, our earth, our food, our water, our electricity, our policemen. When we talk about the mandala setup we are speaking of an organic reality. We are not saying that we should reorganize the world, or that we should fight for it. We are talking about how we could look at it in an organic, natural way. The world could evolve *itself* according to our enlightenment—naturally. If you were a political activist, you might have difficulty in understanding this seemingly wishy-washy philosophy. You might say, "Don't we have to speak up? Don't we have to do something?" But when we talk about the tantric level of perception, we are not talking about concocting something. The outer mandala principle purely refers to actual, immediate relationships, visual, auditory, and conceptual relationships, with the so-called "world outside."

When we relate directly to the world, we can see that there is a thread of continuity. We can see the setup as a whole, rather than having only a partial view. According to the Buddhist path, there is nothing *other* than that whole world; therefore we could say that the tantric attitude toward reality is nontheistic. In the nontheistic approach to reality, the world is not divided between God and the Devil. The world is a totality in itself. It has its own muscles, its own brain, its own limbs, and its own circulation. The world has its own water system, electrical system, and



sewage system automatically built in. They are already there. The problem we face is that we do not see that totality; we do not acknowledge it. We do not even get close to it, to see that it is actually true.

We are not talking about the totality of the world in the sense that everything should be good and perfect and fantastic, and nobody should acknowledge anything bad. We are talking about reality, in which good is made out of bad and bad is made out of good. Therefore, the world can exist in its own good/bad level, its self-existing level of dark and light, black and white, constantly. We are not fighting for either of those sides. Whatever there is, favorable or unfavorable, it is workable; it is the universe. That is why in the tantric tradition we talk about the world, or the cosmos, in terms of mandala.

Mandala is a totality; it has a universal quality. That totality is not a compromise, as if someone were to say, "If you tone down your badness and I tone down my goodness we will have a happy medium, with both good and bad toned down to a grey level." That kind of compromise is not a totality; it is just gray and depressing. In fact, that is one of the depressing aspects of some of the ecumenical movements taking place in this country and the rest of the world. They seem to be based on the feeling that everything should be okay and that everything is good. Badness should come up to the level of goodness, and goodness should come down to the level of badness, so that we can have some kind of happy medium. In that approach, there could be communist Buddhists or Nazi tantric practitioners. But somehow that does not work; it is too silly.

### INNER MANDALA

We have been talking about the external world, or the world of perceptions, as a mandala that we are able to work with. The second type of world is the body, which is known as the inner mandala. This mandala is connected with how we handle our bodies in terms of our awareness, or sense of reality.

Developing awareness is quite deliberate. In the beginning we might feel that working deliberately with the body is too exaggerated a form of behavior. However, it seems to be necessary. We have never regarded our bodies as sacred property. The attitude of sacredness has been ne-

glected, particularly in the Western world. Instead, life is regarded as a hassle. We were born, breast-fed or bottle-fed, and put into diapers. Those were our unpleasant facts of life. Now we can go to the toilet and drink our cup of tea—how victorious we are! We view it as a victory that we have survived all that. But we have not actually developed any art in our lives. We do not know how to care for our bodies.

Taking care of ourselves is regarded as an enormous hassle: getting up at a certain time, writing checks, going to the bank, going to a restaurant are all done humorlessly. Perhaps our only delight is to get drunk at a party. We have a fantastic time dancing with our partner, whoever it may be, and then we peacefully pass out. That is a very crude way of handling our bodies. There is no dignity in that, none whatsoever.

We may have been taught sophisticated table manners by our aristocratic parents. They may have taught us how to drink, how to use forks and knives, and how to sit properly and make good conversation. Still, there is some fundamental crudeness involved, because we have been taught a facade, rather than what should be felt. We could be extremely well-mannered and able to pass through diplomatic circles immaculately and impeccably. Nevertheless, there could still be a crudeness of fundamentally not knowing how to relate with our cup of tea, our plate, our table, or our chair.

There are enormous problems with thinking that we can only trust in what we were told rather than in how we feel. When we have only been told how to handle ourselves, our behavior can become automatic. Automatically we pick and choose. We learn to be perfect actors. It does not matter how we feel. We might be in tears, but still we put on a gleaming smile and make polite conversation. If we cannot find anything good to talk about, we just talk about the weather. With that approach, we become very crude. In fact, we are trying to become perfect actors rather than real people.

Some students of meditation have a similar problem. They have been told to keep a good posture and that the more a person keeps perfect posture, the closer he or she is to enlightenment. If one takes that approach without a sense of personal connection, it can produce a situation similar to that of the children of aristocracy who are taught to have good table manners. In both cases, there is a body problem, an actual physical problem, which has nothing to do with politics or society.

The tantric tradition is fundamentally an intentional approach to life



in terms of how we handle our body. How we speak, how we look, how we touch our cup, our fork or knife, how we lift things and carry them about—all those things are very deliberate. But such deliberateness is not presented in a manual or book on how to act according to the tantric tradition. The point is that there is no such thing as a real tantric diet or proper tantric behavior. Instead, we develop a basic attitude, so that when we begin to extend our arm, we simply do it. When we begin to touch, we touch; and when we lift, we lift in a very confident way. We just do it. We have a real experience of confidence. There is no tantric finishing school designed to train people for the tantric aristocracy or to develop a deceptive but well-mannered king. The tantric approach to body—how to handle our body and our sense perceptions, how to look, how to feel, how to listen, how to handle the whole situation—is very personal and real.

Tantra is deliberate, but at the same time, the heart of that deliberateness is freedom. The “crazy yogins” of the tantric tradition were not people who just hung out on street corners doing their crazy things. The freedom of tantra is something very real, dignified, and vajra-like. The sense of indestructibility is always there. There is intention, there is reality, and there are constant discoveries.

### SECRET MANDALA

Then we have the third world, which is the secret mandala, or the mandala of the sacred realm. The sacredness and secretness of this mandala are not based on our being highly evolved and consequently looking down upon the outer mandala and the inner mandala. Rather, the secret mandala consists of simplifying our psychological behavior, our meditative behavior, into a sense of awareness and openness in which we have no hesitation, none whatsoever, in dealing with our emotions.

In the secret mandala, emotions are all interwoven and interconnected. Passion is connected with aggression, aggression is connected with ignorance, ignorance is connected with envy or jealousy, and so forth. There is a continuous web taking place that is quite obvious and real. Therefore a person at the tantric level should not regard any *one* emotion as a big deal, but all emotions are a big deal. All the emotions that exist in a person's mind are the same problem—or the same prom-

ise, for that matter. They contain the seed of freedom, or liberation, and as well, the seed of imprisonment. In the secret mandala we work with all our hidden corners, any little areas of irritation. In fact, those things that we regard as little problems may actually be our biggest problems. Those problems are completely interrelated, which is the notion of mandala here.

There is a sense of continuity in our emotions and a sense of openness at the same time. For instance, we lose our temper, we become outraged, we are about to strangle our partner, and in fact we begin to do so—that itself is a mandala display. We feel angry, we feel passionate, we feel jealous, and we feel ignorant—all those things are happening at once. That is a real experience. There is no “how to do it”; we did it already. That is our chance. In fact, that is our golden opportunity. We have manifested the secret mandala already.

On the other hand, we usually do not acknowledge or experience our emotions properly. When we need release we might make love; when we need release we might kill someone. That is not quite the proper way to approach our emotions. Exploding on the spot is not the way to express emotions directly. Emotions are sacred; they should be regarded as real and obvious things that can teach us something. We should relate with them properly, without “getting off” on something or other. We might say, “I’m bored. Let’s go to the movies.” That is not quite the way to deal with our boredom.

The tantric approach to emotions is much more disciplined and much more personal. It is highly personal; that is why this mandala is called the sacred mandala. It is very difficult to achieve, but it is also very important and extremely sacred. Normally, no one is able to achieve such perfection, or even to conceive of such a possibility. So we should respect the sacredness of the secret mandala.

The mandala principle is an important concept in the tantric teachings. The outer mandala is connected with the external world: how to relate to society, politics, organizations, domestic relationships, and so forth. The inner mandala is connected with our body, and how to handle it. The secret mandala is connected with how to deal with our emotions. We have to incorporate all three mandala principles simultaneously in our experience. We can't separate them; we can't practice each of them



separately, at different times. We have to do it all at once. In that way things become much more real.

The mandalas *are* reality. It is as simple as that. Of course, reality is real, but our contact with reality is through our sense perceptions, our body, and our emotions—the three mandalas. The three mandalas are what meet, or mate, with reality. When we put our finger on a hot stove, it is our perceptions that get burnt by their meeting with reality. We have to communicate with reality; otherwise, there is no reality. We might try to get out of the whole thing by saying, “Who cares?” But *that* becomes reality at the same time. We cannot get away from it. It is very personal, and it is very haunting. It is all over the place.