

Explaining Tantra in Tibetan Buddhism at Shuchi-in University

April 10th 2014

Kyoto, Japan, 10 April 2014 - His Holiness the Dalai Lama began the day by driving from Osaka to Kyoto, where he was warmly received at Shuchi-in University by the Dean, Ven. Suguri Kouzui, who is also Chief Abbot of the Nakayama Dera Temple. Shuchi-in University traces its origins back to the Shugeishuchi-in or School for Arts and Sciences established in 828 CE in the grounds of the Toji Temple in Kyoto by Kukai or Kobo Daishi, founder of the Shingon Tradition of Japanese Buddhism. It was the first educational institution in Japan open to students without regard to their social or economic status. The present Shuchi-in University was re-established in its current location in 1949.

In the packed hall, His Holiness took his seat on the stage, seated before a statue of Mahavairochana flanked by two sets of his mandalas and began his talk.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaking at Shuchi-in University in Kyoto, Japan on April 10, 2014. Photo/Office of Tibet, Japan	“You have requested me to talk about Tibetan secret mantra. Tibetans began to take an interest in Buddhism in the 7th
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century during the reign of Songtsen Gampo who had taken a Chinese and a Nepalese princess as wives. Both of them had brought statues of the Buddha with them, which were to inspire an interest in his teachings. Later, Trisong Deutsan recognised that Buddhism originated in India and that is where he turned to learn more. He invited Shantarakshita from Nalanda University and it was he who began the dissemination of Buddhism in Tibet. He also instigated the project to translate Indian Buddhist literature into Tibetan, which eventually formed the collections of the Kangyur and Tengyur. He wrote the ‘Ornament of Madhyamaka’, which we still study today, and the ‘Compendium of Reality; the first a work of philosophy and the second a work of logic and epistemology.”

Shantarakshita’s disciple, Kamalashila, also an erudite scholar, was invited later. He had written a ‘Lamp of the Madhyamaka’ and a commentary to his master’s ‘Compendium of Reality’. These two masters took primary responsibility for establishing Buddhism in Tibet. With the first ordinations Shantarakshita established the Mulasarvastavadin Vinaya, while philosophically he was a proponent of the Yogachara-svatantrika-madhyamaka view which combined views of both Asanga and Nagarjuna. He established the Vinaya as the basis of the teachings.

His Holiness explained that Guru Padmasambhava was responsible for eliminating obstacles and today is remembered as the Master in the trio - Abbot (Shantarakshita), Master and King (Trisong Deutsan) - who laid the foundations for Buddhism in Tibet.

As a bhikshu, Shantarakshita upheld the Vinaya himself, his 'Ornament of Madhyamaka' indicates that cultivation of bodhichitta as well as an understanding of emptiness were part of his practice, while another of his writings, a small text called 'Chapter on Reality' indicate that he also practised Highest Yoga Tantra. In short he was an exemplar of the Nalanda tradition.

This is an approach that can be traced back to Nagarjuna who, taking the Vinaya as the basis, cultivated the awakening mind of bodhichitta through the method of exchanging self and others. His writings also reveal the explicit content of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, emptiness, and engagement in the generation and completion stages of Highest Yoga Tantra. His Holiness said that Nagarjuna's disciples Aryadeva and Chandrakirti followed a similar approach. What this shows is the origin of the Tibetan custom of a practitioner holding the three vows, pratimoksha vows, bodhisattva vows and tantric vows.

His Holiness cited himself as an example. He is a monk; he renews his bodhisattva vows and contemplates emptiness daily and every day engages in six different deity yoga practices.

Regarding the origin of tantrayana, he said that



Members of the audience listening to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's talk at Shuchi-in University in Kyoto, Japan on April 10, 2014.

Photo/Jeremy Russell/OHHDL

the Four Noble Truths are the basis of all Buddhist teachings and from them are derived the 37 factors of enlightenment, which are also common to all traditions. Then in the Sanskrit tradition we find the Perfection of Wisdom teachings that were given on Vulture's Peak before gatherings that included disciples like Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri and Samantabhadra. These are the teachings of the Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma concerning the selflessness of persons and phenomena. They include the Heart Sutra that we all recite, which features a dialogue between Shariputra and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. This teaching did not take place in public, but before those whose pure karma enabled them to see and hear Avalokiteshvara as well as Shariputra.

His Holiness clarified that while the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma dealt with the Four Noble Truths, teachings given in public, for which there is a historical record, the Second Turning

deals with the Perfection of Wisdom teachings. The Third Turning deals with Buddha nature and the clear light nature of the mind and how to use it. This is the basis of the practice of secret mantra. He explained that the Second and Third Turnings did not take place in public but before a more select gathering of disciples. They are not included in the historical record because that accounts for teachings belonging to the general structure of the doctrine, not teachings that were given for specific disciples.

His Holiness stressed that great Indian masters like Nagarjuna and Aryadeva have examined these issues with reason and logic and vouched for the authenticity of the Sanskrit tradition, the practice of the bodhisattva vehicle, the perfection of wisdom vehicle and the vehicle of tantra. He quoted Chandrakirti describing five stages of tantra:

1. The generation stage
2. The completion stage
3. Isolation
4. The illusory body and clear light
5. Union

He said that the generation stage involves the visualization of deities. In Highest Yoga Tantra this also involves taking the Buddha's three bodies, the Truth Body, Complete Enjoyment Body and Emanation Body into the path through the processes of death, intermediate state and rebirth respectively. Whereas the Sutra literature speaks of taking three countless aeons or more to reach

Buddhahood, tantric texts speak of doing so in one life in the one body.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama presenting a Buddha statue to Ven. Suguri Kouzui, Dean of the University, after his talk at Shuchi-in University in Kyoto, Japan on April 10, 2014. Photo/Office of Tibet, Japan

Among several questions, His Holiness was asked what he thought of the suggestion that Kobo Daishi, who apparently died in the 9th century is still in meditation. He answered that it was possible. There are accounts of great adepts in the past attaining enlightenment and remaining in meditation until the next Buddha appears in the world, Tibetan masters among them. He was also asked about compassion in relation

to Avalokiteshvara and replied that compassion is said to be the root of the attainment of Buddhahood. He said he had already mentioned Avalokiteshvara's role as a person participating in the dialogue of the 'Heart Sutra', but there is also the aspect of Avalokiteshvara the bodhisattva embodying all the Buddhas' compassion, much as Manjushri is said to embody all their wisdom.

"Finally, in this place which has a special connection to Kobo Daishi," His Holiness said, "I'd like to thank you Japanese followers of the Buddha for this opportunity to hold discussions with you," and presented the Dean with a statue of the Buddha.

Ven. Chijun Suga, President of Dosokai and Chief Administrator of the Zentsuji Temple in Shikoku where Kobo Daishi was born, in his words of thanks expressed gratitude to His Holiness for coming. He mentioned that followers of all Buddhist sects had attended the talk. He requested His Holiness to maintain his connection with the University because of its strong links to Kobo Daishi. He concluded

saying:

“All of us pray for peace in Tibet and that His Holiness may have a long life.”

His Holiness was offered lunch before departing for his hotel. For the next two days he will participate in a dialogue in Kyoto focussed on Mapping the Mind

Vairochana-abhisambodhi Empowerment in Koyasan

April 14th 2014

Koyasan, Japan, 14 April 2014 - In contrast to yesterday, the weather this morning was bright as His Holiness the Dalai Lama walked to the Koyasan University Auditorium. He was to undertake the preparatory rituals for the Vairochana-abhisambodhi empowerment he was going to give.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama and monks from Namgyal Monastery performing Vairochana-abhisambodhi empowerment preparation rituals at the

Koyasan University Auditorium in Koyasan, Japan on April 14, 2014.

Photo/Jeremy Russell/OHHDL

He was supported by a team of monks from Namgyal Monastery, including the Khenpo and Lopon, led by former Abbot Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. The team arrived earlier this month and worked over several days to create an elaborate sand mandala for the empowerment. This morning they sat

with His Holiness chanting the self-empowerment and preparatory rituals accompanied by an elaborate array of mudras or hand gestures.

In the time that remained of the morning session, His Holiness gave a concise explanation of the ‘Eight Verses for

Training the Mind’.

“As I said yesterday,” he began, “the awakening mind of bodhichitta is the main cause of Buddhahood. If you have bodhichitta, you will achieve Buddhahood. In the Heart Sutra it says that the Buddhas of the past, present and future rely on wisdom to become fully enlightened. If you have an understanding of emptiness but are motivated to achieve liberation that’s where it will lead, only if you have bodhichitta will it lead to Buddhahood. Bodhichitta has two aspects the wish to benefit others and the wish to achieve Buddhahood.

“Buddhahood is synonymous with omniscience, which is essential because if you don’t know what they need you could make a mistake and do them harm. And to achieve omniscience we need to overcome the obstructions to knowledge. Chandrakirti’s ‘Clear Words’ defines these as the latent potencies left by negative emotions. As long as these remain, dual appearance remains. All the Buddhas of the past, present and future have become enlightened on the basis of bodhichitta and the wisdom understanding emptiness.”

His Holiness reiterated that bodhichitta is indispensable for the achievement of enlightenment. But there is also no higher factor for achieving higher rebirth, because it naturally induces restraint from killing and other harmful actions which lead to lower rebirth. In his ‘Jewel Garland’ Nagarjuna extols the practice of exchanging self and others and Shantideva says there is no greater cause of happiness. Bodhichitta is the source of all that is good for ourselves and others. On the other hand, His Holiness said, the more selfish you are, the more you will distance yourself from others, seeing them in terms of ‘me’ and ‘them’.

The author of 'Eight Verses for Training the Mind', essentially a text about the practice of bodhichitta, Geshe Langri Tangpa, was one of the chief disciples of Geshe Potowa, who was one of the main disciples of Dromtonpa, the principal disciple of Atisha. His Holiness pointed out that the sense of the original Tibetan in each of the verses is to say deliberately 'I will do this...' or 'I will do that...' but when it is used as recitative text we tend to say 'May I do this...' or 'May I do that...'



His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaking during the morning session of his teachings in Koyasan, Japan on April 14, 2014.

Photo/Jeremy Russell/OHHDL

Beginning with the first verse His Holiness explained that cherishing others is about not looking down on them and regarding them as more important than you. It involves acknowledging that all worldly success comes about in dependence on other beings. Higher rebirth is achieved in dependence on other beings. Omniscience is achieved by relying on other beings. The question then is why we show the Buddhas respect, but not other beings. Chandrakirti says that compassion for sentient beings is both the seed and the harvest. Because sentient beings are kind to us, we should be grateful and cherish them as supreme.

Suggesting that we need to take account of how we exclude others through our use of language, he said:

"I tell myself that as a Buddhist monk, a follower of the Buddha, a follower of the pure authentic Nalanda tradition, if you are unable to cherish others, you should

think of yourself as the lowest of all. “

It is because we cling to true existence and cherish ourselves that we are under the sway of disturbing emotions. Among those referred to negatively in the fourth verse, His Holiness suggested we could include people beset by serious illness. He said that he recently visited a leprosy clinic in Delhi where a Japanese called Sasakawa offers help and support to those afflicted by the disease.



Members of the audience at the Koyasan University Auditorium listening to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings in Koyasan, Japan on April 14, 2014.
Photo/Jeremy Russell/OHHDL

“These people are often stigmatized and face hostility, but as I told Indian officials there they are human beings, people like us, and yet they are cast out.”

When someone insults you or behaves unpleasantly to you it is hard to be good to them in return, especially if you have already tried to help them. It is important to practise patience and you can be grateful to them for giving you the opportunity to do so. His Holiness explained that the

description of the practice of exchanging self for others, ‘May I give all help to my mothers and may all their negativity ripen on me’ may not actually help them, but it builds your courage and self-confidence.

The final verse refers to not letting your practice be sullied by worldly concerns, such as a wish for praise and reward. The solution is to see things as like an illusion. His Holiness remarked that selflessness of persons was referred to in the first turning of the wheel of Dharma, but the Perfection of Wisdom teachings of the

second turning of the wheel explain that phenomena are empty of intrinsic existence too. Because phenomena still appear to be intrinsically existent, even when you know they are not, regard them as like an illusion. This is to avoid clinging to that appearance which is the basis for the arising of emotions like anger and attachment. Ignorance pervades all disturbing emotions. By overcoming ignorance we will overcome all disturbing emotions. His Holiness concluded:

“This text by Langri Tangpa emphasizes the practice of bodhichitta. It would be good to memorize this and the text I explained yesterday, the ‘Song of Experience’ to be better able to apply what they teach in your day to day life. Now, it’s nearly midday and time for the food empowerment!”

After lunch, His Holiness began by pointing out that the Mahayana consists of the Perfection Vehicle and the Vajra Vehicle. Following the Perfection Vehicle you cultivate the path, progressing through four paths to reach the fifth which is Buddhahood. In the Vajra Vehicle you cultivate the four pure states of Buddhahood - pure body, pure environment, pure resources and pure activity - in the present and follow the path. The Vajra Vehicle is cultivated in secret; it’s referred to as esoteric, because the Buddha taught it to a few select disciples. In some



Senior students receiving ritual blessings during the Vairochana-abhisambodhi empowerment bestowed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Koyasan, Japan on April 14, 2014.

Photo/Office of Tibet, Japan

mandalas he appeared as a monk, but mostly he manifested as the lord of the mandala.

Mantra, His Holiness explained, can be understood as shielding the mind; shielding it from ordinary appearance.

He noted that the Vairochana-abhisambodhi empowerment belongs to the second class of tantra, Performance Tantra, that he received it from Ling Rinpoche in the Tsuglagkhang in Dharamsala and subsequently performed the retreat. At the end he remarked that the goal was to fulfil the temporary and ultimate purposes of all sentient beings and that what is important is to cultivate compassion and an understanding of emptiness.

With that he returned to his rooms in the Kongo-bu-ji temple nearby. Tomorrow he will return to the auditorium for a public talk and an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions, before travelling to Tokyo.

Pilgrimage to Koyasan, Headquarters of the Shingon Tradition of Japanese Buddhism

April 13th 2014

Koyasan, Japan, 13 April 2014 - Skies were grey and there was a chill in the air this morning as His Holiness the Dalai Lama left Kyoto to drive to Koyasan. The Koyasan mountains south of Osaka are the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism, sometimes referred to as Esoteric Buddhism, an epithet for the path of secret mantra. This is what Kobo Daishi, founder of the Shingon tradition, learned and brought back to Japan after travelling to China in the early ninth century CE. One of his motives for making the journey was to learn Sanskrit

to better understand Buddhist scriptures and it seems that one of his early teachers was an Indian Pandit called Prajna who had studied at Nalanda. Kobo Daishi founded the Kongobuji Temple at Koyasan in 816 and passed away in 835 at the age of 62. His Holiness has been invited to teach and grant the Mahakarunagarbhadbhava Mandala Initiation.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama walking to the residential quarters at the Kongobuji Temple in Koyasan, Japan on April 13, 2014. Photo/Office of Tibet, Japan

On arrival, His Holiness was welcomed at the grand main gate and escorted along wooden corridors, past rooms divided by painted wooden and paper screens, through the complex of buildings that make up Kongobuji to his accommodation. After a traditional Japanese lunch he was driven the short distance to the Koyasan University Auditorium where people from many parts of Japan and abroad were waiting for him.

“Abbot of Koyasan, Dharma brothers and sisters, including some from China, I am very happy to be here and to have this opportunity to speak to you,” were His Holiness’s opening words. “I’ve been here twice before and I’ve given the Vairochana Initiation before too. The difference this time is that it’s so cold. The monks who came on ahead told me there was snowfall and it was very cold just last week and I noticed some remaining clumps of unmelted snow on my way here. Perhaps there was snow to make us Tibetans feel at home.”

To set his Buddhist talk in context, he began by explaining the background to religious practice in the world, suggesting that religion started to appear 3-4000

years ago. 2600 years ago Jainism was founded in India, followed shortly afterwards by the foundation of Buddhism. Judaism, Christianity and Islam emerged from the Middle East, while one of the oldest religious traditions, Zoroastrianism originated in Persia. All these traditions promote love and compassion, however, history shows repeated conflict in the name of religion. Sadly, when this occurs it is like medicine being transformed into poison. However, His Holiness says it does not have to be this way, because all the major world religions exist amicably in India where they live and have lived for centuries side by side in peace and harmony. If inter-religious harmony can be achieved in India, he said, it can happen elsewhere too.

He explained that the basis of Buddhism is the Four Noble Truths which the Buddha taught because we don't want suffering. The cause of suffering is ignorance, but ignorance is eliminated by knowledge. The first turning of the wheel of Dharma dealt with the Four Noble Truths, the Vinaya, monastic discipline, and concentration, and was taught in public. The second turning concerned the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, of which the Heart Sutra is a brief example. It involves a dialogue between the disciple Shariputra and the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. It was attended by a more select gathering of people whose merit enabled them to see and hear Avalokiteshvara. With the third turning of the wheel of Dharma the Buddha taught about Buddha nature and also about the clear light of the mind.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaking during his teaching at Koyasan, Japan on April 13, 2014. Photo/Office of Tibet, Japan

With his eye on the clock, His Holiness asked if he could teach half an hour longer than announced to be able to finish the text. His question met with a round of applause. He told a story of an elderly lama in Amdo who was invited to teach at a neighbouring monastery but responded that he was too old to travel. His hosts qualified their request, telling him that he didn't need to teach, coming and giving blessings would suffice. He went and gave a long, thorough and profound teaching ending with the admonition that he was not the kind of man to go here and there just to lay his hands on people, "I teach", he said.



Members of the audience listening to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings at Koyasan, Japan on April 13, 2014.

Photo/Office of Tibet, Japan

"In 7th century Tibet, the Tang Emperor's daughter was married to the Tibetan Emperor Songtsen Gampo, who also married a Nepalese princess. Both wives brought statues of the Buddha with them that instigated Tibetan interest in Buddhism. Shantarakshita, one of Nalanda University's top scholars was invited to Tibet. He was a great philosopher and logician, who also practised tantra and these qualities set the tone for the development of Tibetan Buddhism. Guru Padmasambhava, who was not a monk, overcame obstacles to the Dharma in Tibet. This trio of abbot, adept and king established the outer practice of the

Vinaya, the inner practice of a bodhisattva and the secret practice of tantra.

“Later, after Tibet had fragmented in the 9th century a second dissemination of the Dharma gave rise to the Sakya, Kagyu and Gelug traditions, all of which can be traced back to Nalanda. The source of the Nalanda tradition is the work and writings of Indian masters like Nagarjuna, whose texts we continue to memorize word by word today. We, next, examine and study them thoroughly and finally exercise our understanding in debate.”

His Holiness reminded everyone present that when Dharma is concerned it is important that both teacher and students set a good motivation. He said that for the practice to be Buddhist those involved should take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. For it to belong to the Mahayana they should generate the awakening mind of bodhichitta. After a recitation of the Heart Sutra in Japanese, His Holiness led the assembly in reciting the well-known verse for taking refuge and generating the awakening mind. He then read briskly through Tsongkhapa's 'Concise Stages of the Path to Enlightenment - the Song of Experience (latria dud on) stopping every so often to clarify a point. At the end he laughed as he told his listeners that he and Tsongkhapa come from the same part of Tibet, Kombi being barely a day's horse ride from Tauter.

Tomorrow, His Holiness will complete the teaching and bestow the Mahakarunagarbhadbhava Mandala Initiation