

Ari Goldfield's introduction to the Seattle Program at Nalanda West Dec 2-10

As in past years, the course will be divided into a public component (December 2-3) and a Mahamudra component (December 4-10).

The public weekend's topic will be the new book *The Moon of Wisdom*, which Khenpo Rinpoche directed should be the main topic of the North American teachings in 2006.

The Moon of Wisdom is a translation of the "Wisdom Chapter" of Chandrakirti's *Entering the Middle Way*, including a commentary by the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje entitled *The Chariot of the Dagpo Kagyü Siddhas*. It is the text that Khenpo Rinpoche personally taught to His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa in 2002. The book explains: the true nature of relative appearances and genuine reality; how it is that knowing this true nature is helpful to us and increases our wisdom and compassion; and step-by-step, how we can understand, gain certainty in, and realize it, to the great benefit of both ourselves and others.

In Seattle Ari will summarize the key points of the first part of the book in direct connection with how to apply them in meditation and daily life.

During the Mahamudra teachings, the main topic of the morning teachings will be the Four Yogas of Mahamudra, which are: one-pointed-ness, freedom from fabrications, one taste, and non-meditation. These four yogas describe the complete Mahamudra path, from the stage of a beginning meditator all the way until the true nature of mind is perfectly realized. Khenpo Rinpoche's remarkable tradition is to explain the four yogas in a clear, easy to understand series of increasingly profound stages of view and meditation that we can directly apply in our own practice.

As a basis for his teachings on the four yogas, Khenpo Rinpoche recently began to use the renowned Drukpa Kagyü scholar-siddha Pema Karpo's text entitled *Pointing Out Genuine Reality*. Rarely taught in the West, Pema Karpo's concise text is literally a treasure of brilliant insight that illuminates precisely what the Kagyü view of Mahamudra is, and of pith meditation instructions on how to realize this view in one's own experience. Students who encounter this text find it highly revealing and beneficial to their meditation practice, which is why, out of all the texts on the four yogas available, Rinpoche has selected this one to serve as the basis of his own teachings.

At the same time, in order to present to students the different perspectives of the great masters of Mahamudra, Khenpo Rinpoche augments his explanations of Pema Karpo's text with teachings on the vajra songs of realization on the four yogas sung by the Lord of Yogis Milarepa and Jamgon Kongtrül the Great, along with Dzogchen Paltrül Rinpoche's verses describing of the four yogas in connection with the deity practice of Chenrezik.

Rinpoche has twice presented this amazing combination of profound teachings on Mahamudra four yogas' view and key meditation instructions on Mahamudra four yogas' practice. Ari had the great fortune to receive both of these sets of teachings from

Rinpoche and will be delighted to share them with the students in Seattle in a step-by-step way that will include explanation of the view, guided meditation instruction, and question-and-answer sessions.

The main topic of the afternoon teachings will be Milarepa's Vajra Songs of Realization that Khenpo Rinpoche taught to His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa. Khenpo Rinpoche has given all of his students the wonderful blessing of explaining the profound view, meditation, conduct, and fruition as they are described by the Lord of Yogis Milarepa in his vajra songs of realization. Rinpoche has shown us how these incredible songs sung by Milarepa, the only Tibetan in history whom all followers of Tibetan Buddhism agree attained enlightenment in one lifetime, are of direct relevance and benefit to our cultivation of wisdom, compassion, faith, transformation of difficult circumstances into advantageous ones, and joy in the practice of Dharma. And by giving us the priceless gift of teaching us how to sing these songs, Rinpoche has helped us to make a direct connection with Milarepa's brilliance, devotion, love, and blessings.

For a month in 2001, Khenpo Rinpoche gave teachings to His Holiness Karmapa, including explanations of a series of Milarepa's songs. Karmapa later stated, "Everything I know about Milarepa I learned from Khenpo Rinpoche. With Milarepa's songs, Khenpo Rinpoche is like my mother." Ari delights in the opportunity to share with the students of the Seattle course Rinpoche's teachings on these songs that he taught to His Holiness.

And for an hour each day after the afternoon teaching, Alexandra Kalinine will give instruction in The Tara Dance to everyone who is interested in learning it. No previous dance experience is required and men and women of all ages and physical condition are welcome.

Song and dance are a special and ever-present part of Khenpo Rinpoche's instructions on how to connect with the true nature of reality with both our bodies and minds, and so many people—men and women, old and young alike—have enjoyed and benefited from learning Rinpoche's dance tradition in the past. We are very fortunate that our dance instructor will be Alexandra, whom Khenpo Rinpoche has appointed as dance instructor for his own sangha and whom, in a recent letter to Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, Khenpo Rinpoche recommended as a dance instructor for the Shambhala centers as well.

The Tara Dance that Alexandra will teach us will give us the chance to learn about Tara's wisdom and compassion, and how these connect with our own; to deepen our experience and understanding of the bodhisattva vow; and to practice Mahamudra's instructions on how to realize the true nature of mind. The dance follows a text that Khenpo Rinpoche himself composed, telling the story of Tara's great love, courage, her path to enlightenment, and the way she protects sentient beings from fear. Through Tara's blessing, when we learn her dance we directly experience how compassion, wisdom, and faith protect the mind from being afraid. We gain a precious opportunity to relax deeply and to look directly at the essence of our experience.

Khenpo Rinpoche has often stated that if we would like to transform the world into one of peace and happiness, we should perform this dance of the noble liberator Tara, embodiment of the great mother Dharmakaya. When we gather to perform this sacred dance, Tara's mandala magically unfolds and her blessings are tangibly present. It is a wondrous event.

The dance instruction will culminate in a dance performance for the audience of all the students; an offering to all buddhas and bodhisattvas that is a celebration of the joy we experience as a result of having met the Dharma in this lifetime. However, it is perfectly acceptable for people to learn the dance but not participate in the final performance if they do not wish to do so. All students are encouraged to attend the dance classes themselves, because as Alexandra describes:

"Dancing in this context is not about a dance performance—it is about being genuine. We renounce everything that is a barrier between us and others, and we be ourselves while serving a common cause. This is a way, to let blow a wind of joy and power, to ride this energy, and to conquer it. While we are dancing, we can stop judging ourselves, we can relax more, and appreciate our body and mind, in a very simple way, even in the middle of confusion. In fact, we can jump straight into our confusion, not letting ourselves be stopped by our clumsiness, but jumping straight into it, landing with our two feet smack in the middle of the puddle of our seriousness. We can let this confidence radiate out, to be of benefit to sentient beings."

Notes:

The teaching schedule of the first session will be from 10:30-12:30 and the second session from 4:00-6:00. The dance instruction by Alexandra will go from 6:15-7:15 every evening.

New students should have read the Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness, The Sun of Wisdom, and should have listened to at least the 2005 teachings' tapes before the course. If they could listen to both 2004 and 2005 that would be the best, but if they can't finish 2004 before the course, they should do so afterwards.

Publications:

Everyone at the public teachings should have the Moon of Wisdom, which is available at the store at Nalanda West and Snowlion Publications. The Sun of Wisdom and Distinguishing Phenomena and Pure Being will also be available and are recommended.

Ari will provide materials for the Mahamudra teachings in an English-only book of about 35 pages. This will be available at the bookstore at Nalanda West, and a longer Tibetan-English edition may also be available. If you are interested in a Tibetan-English edition, please contact KTGRregistration06@nalandabodhi.org.