

INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE PSICOLOGIA APLICADA



RETIRO DE MEDITAÇÃO BUDISTA:

ESTUDO EXPLORATÓRIO À LUZ DO MÉTODO FENOMENOLÓGICO

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Tese submetida como requisito parcial para obtenção do grau de

Mestre em Psicologia
Especialidade em Clínica

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TÍTULO DA DISSERTAÇÃO: Retiro de Meditação Budista – Estudo Exploratório à Luz do Método Fenomenológico

RESUMO

O Fenómeno de Retiro de Meditação Budista está presente nas sociedades modernas ocidentais mas escasseiam os dados empíricos que incidam sobre esta temática. Muitos estudos foram desenvolvidos acerca da meditação, sendo que a maioria segue métodos quantitativos e não tem em conta o contexto no qual a meditação é praticada. Outros estudos incidem sobre a importação da meditação como ferramenta da psicologia para uso terapêutico. Este estudo considera o fenómeno de retiro de meditação no âmbito da espiritualidade/religiosidade dado que este se desenvolve no contexto do budismo: uma religião/prática espiritual. Este estudo desenvolve-se então com um carácter exploratório e seguindo o Método Fenomenológico com o objectivo de aceder aos significados atribuídos pelos próprios participantes à sua experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Pretende apenas conhecer e clarificar os processos psicológicos associados a este fenómeno e quais as relações entre eles. Este objectivo é alcançado e encontram-se três estruturas da experiência para os seis participantes entrevistados; identificam-se também constituintes chave da experiência. A partir destes constituintes chave e das estruturas da experiência são discutidas as relações possíveis entre o fenómeno de retiro de meditação budista e questões de *coping*, bem-estar geral e espiritual, percepção de controlo, etc. Problemáticas são levantadas para investigação futura que incida em aspectos específicos dos dados deste estudo mas que os possa explorar mais aprofundadamente.

Palavras-chave: Retiro de Meditação; Budismo; Espiritualidade; Bem-Estar; Método Fenomenológico.

TÍTULO DA DISSERTAÇÃO EM INGLÊS: Buddhist Meditation Retreat – a
Phenomenological Approach

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of Buddhist meditation retreat is now a part of modern western societies but few empirical data can be found about it. Much research has been done on meditation itself, most of it being quantitative studies that do not take into account the context in which meditation is practiced. Other studies can be found in which meditation is imported as a tool for psychology to use in psychotherapeutic settings. The current study looks at the phenomenon of meditation retreat within the scope of religion/spirituality since it occurs in the context of a religious/spiritual practice: Buddhism. The study follows then an exploratory approach and according to the Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method. Its purpose is to access the meanings attributed to the experience of being in a Buddhist meditation retreat by the participants themselves; solely to comprehend and clarify the psychological processes associated to the phenomenon and the relationships between them. The goal is achieved and three structures of the experience are found for the six participants; also the key constituents of the experience are identified. Referring to the structures and key constituents, the possible implications of the phenomenon and issues such as coping, general and spiritual well-being, etc. are discussed. New directions for further research are indicated as to clarify and in-depth explore questions that have been raised by the data analysis and discussion.

**Key-words: Meditation Retreat; Buddhism; Spirituality; Well-Being;
Phenomenological Method.**

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INTRODUÇÃO

Nos dias de hoje não precisamos de nos deslocar às cavernas dos países orientais para encontrar praticantes de meditação em retiro. Eles estão por todo o mundo, incluindo nas sociedades ocidentais. Contrariando a ideia habitual do praticante espiritual que foge da sociedade para encontrar paz mental, isolado do mundo, estes praticantes treinam a sua mente em retiro para poder experimentar essa paz e integrar a experiência nas suas vidas diárias inseridos nas sociedades modernas, perfeitamente integrados no modo de vida moderno ocidental.

De facto a prática da Meditação Budista tem vindo a aumentar nas sociedades modernas. Hoje o Budismo encontra-se em quase todos os países do mundo, amplamente divulgado pelas diferentes Escolas, e embora não se encontrem estatísticas fiáveis a nível mundial estima-se que conte com cerca de 376 milhões de seguidores. Este é um fenómeno que também nos afecta a nível nacional. Em Portugal existem várias escolas que representam diferentes tradições um pouco por todo o país.

O fenómeno da meditação foi já objecto de investigação em Psicologia bem como noutras ciências. No entanto em muitos dos estudos realizados encontramos a meditação, enquanto objecto de estudo, retirada do seu contexto religioso/espiritual. Isto ocorre por ela ser utilizada apenas enquanto técnica ou ainda como ferramenta terapêutica. Esses não são então os objectivos deste estudo.

Não se segue uma abordagem que procure estabelecer pontes entre o Budismo e a Psicologia com o intuito de explorar semelhanças. Este tipo de abordagem relaciona-se normalmente com o interesse de importar técnicas do Budismo para uso terapêutico ou de melhorar o Budismo à luz da Ciência Psicológica. Considera-se o exercício de explorar semelhanças e diferenças desnecessário, outros autores

como Shapiro (2006) fazem-no em detalhe. Como referido anteriormente não há um interesse em importar técnicas Budistas descontextualizadas para uso em Psicoterapia. Considera-se potencialmente perigoso o seu uso descontextualizado, tendo em conta a experiência como um todo, ainda que exista bastante literatura acerca de benefícios específicos. Tão-pouco há o interesse de interferir no que é a prática milenar do Budismo. Não há essa pretensão pois parece pouco ético e arrogante empreender tal tarefa. O objectivo do estudo não é ainda o de validar ou infirmar o Budismo como sendo correcto ou a visão Budista como sendo verdadeira.

Pretende-se então apenas explorar o fenómeno da Meditação dentro do próprio contexto da prática Budista integrada nas sociedades modernas. Em particular praticada em retiro. Aceder aos significados da experiência e conhecer os processos psicológicos que lhe estão associados; olhá-los sob uma abordagem da Psicologia recorrendo para tal ao Método Fenomenológico aplicado à Psicologia de Giorgi (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003b).

Porquê estudar o Fenómeno dos Retiros de Meditação Budista?

Primeiramente esta prática, enquanto parte de um envolvimento religioso/espiritual, é relevante dado que sabemos as relações entre religião e variáveis como: saúde geral e mental; bem-estar geral e espiritual; *coping*. A religião está ainda relacionada com fenómenos cognitivos, afectos e emoções, desenvolvimento da personalidade (Hill et al, 2000). Estas variáveis e fenómenos são importantes na qualidade da experiência dos indivíduos e na forma de compreender e lidar com a vida. Tendo isto em conta é importante estudar as especificidades da prática da meditação no contexto Budista e os processos psicológicos a ela associados.

Também o estudo da prática do Budismo no contexto de uma tradição budista integrada nas sociedades modernas é pertinente dado que é um fenómeno relativamente novo mas presente na nossa sociedade. De entre as muitas diferentes tradições Budistas foi escolhida a Nova Tradição Kadampa (NKT) e todo

o estudo se desenvolve no seu contexto. Ela mantém o que se crê serem aspectos essenciais da prática Budista integrando-se nas diferentes culturas e deixando para trás aspectos culturais específicos da Índia ou do Tibete que estão normalmente associados ao Budismo mas que não fazem parte da sua essência. De facto a NKT define-se como tradição Budista internacional embora provenha de uma linhagem Tibetana. Também a abundante literatura desta tradição e a qualidade da tradução e apresentação contribuíram para a sua escolha. Muitos indivíduos (não se encontram estatísticas precisas) praticam meditação Budista no contexto da NKT podendo a sua prática assumir diversos níveis de saliência nas suas vidas (desde o frequentar meditações guiadas ocasionalmente até à ordenação monástica). Mas pouco sabemos acerca deste fenómeno.

É certo que existem dados empíricos sobre técnicas ou componentes específicos de meditação bem como de benefícios da envolvimento na prática de certas meditações que veremos mais adiante. No entanto deparamo-nos com a escassez de investigação acerca de retiro de meditação. Mesmo os dados empíricos que encontramos na literatura não dizem respeito ao retiro de meditação Budista enquanto experiência. O objecto de estudo foram então aspectos específicos da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação Budista, tais como os efeitos de retiro intenso de meditação Budista Zen na congruência do self (Santis et al, 1986); a evocação da ansiedade de morte num retiro de meditação Budista Vipassana (Clement, 2005); ou considerações sobre o self e retiro de meditação Theravadin (Ling, 1982). Estes estudos focam-se em aspectos específicos e não na experiência dos participantes de modo holístico. Além disto nenhum dos estudos encontrados se desenvolveu no contexto da NKT enquanto tradição Budista.

Por último, referimos que a maioria dos estudos encontrados recorrem a métodos quantitativos e abordam aspectos muito específicos do fenómeno da meditação. Os estudos com recurso a Métodos Qualitativos são menos frequentes e em particular não se encontra nenhum que recorra ao Método Fenomenológico.

Assim, dado a escassez de investigação do fenómeno de retiro de meditação Budista é pertinente empreender um estudo com carácter exploratório. Dá-se preferência a uma abordagem holística em que os componentes da experiência possam emergir da narrativa dos participantes sem serem previamente definidos

pelo investigador. Por este motivo se recorre ao Método Fenomenológico.

Retiro de Meditação no Contexto do Budismo como Prática Espiritual

O foco deste estudo é a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação Budista com os significados que lhe são atribuídos pelos próprios participantes da experiência, bem como os processos psicológicos a eles associados. Consideramos o Budismo como uma prática espiritual e religiosa atentando a que religião e espiritualidade são construtos interligados, tendo em comum a busca pelo sagrado (Hill et al, 2000). Zinnbauer (1997) enfatiza que ambos os fenômenos são processos dinâmicos e inter-relacionados com todos os tipos e níveis de experiência incluindo o ordinário e extraordinário, o social e o situacional bem como o pessoal. Neste sentido, a experiência de retiro de meditação será abordada no âmbito da espiritualidade/religiosidade, dado que temos em conta o contexto no qual é praticada: o Budismo.

Sendo a espiritualidade um fenômeno universal, à sua volta surge alguma confusão e incompreensão (Chiu et al, 2004). O próprio Budismo tem por vezes sido alvo desta incompreensão. Há muitas ideias associadas à sua prática que não estão fundamentadas ou, dir-se-ia mesmo, mal fundamentadas. A espiritualidade está frequentemente embebida na cultura e não pode dela ser separada como entidade individual para investigação, tendo sido geralmente descrita de uma perspectiva religiosa e da cultura ocidental (Chiu et al, 2004). Estamos em crer que este tem sido um obstáculo a uma melhor compreensão da prática de meditação Budista e da forma como ela se integra na vida dos praticantes. Aparecem estudos na literatura que analisam e investigam o Budismo não tendo em atenção que muitos dos termos usados no contexto Budista embora sejam iguais aos usados na linguagem corrente ou até mesmo na linguagem da Psicologia, têm a eles associados conceitos em tudo diferentes. Ghose (2004) refere o exemplo da incompreensão do conceito Budista de apego e desapego mas outros podem ser mencionados tais como felicidade, sofrimento, auto-apreço, ignorância, amor, compaixão. A confusão em torno destes termos gera-se pelo seu uso em contextos

diferentes como sejam as comunidades budistas, a sociedade em geral e a própria Psicologia. Em cada um destes contextos a estes conceitos são atribuídos diferentes significados.

Por este motivo e para que não se caia no erro de interpretar termos usados pelos participantes à luz dos conceitos do senso comum ou da própria Psicologia começaremos então por definir a visão Budista de acordo com o próprio Budismo. Uma breve abordagem dos conceitos Budistas permitir-nos-á então imergir um pouco mais nos significados que os próprios sujeitos que praticam retiro de meditação Budista atribuem à realidade e como fazem sentido dela. Partindo desta base parece mais credível que se possa aceder ao significado psicológico por detrás das descrições dos participantes.

Budismo: Da Índia antiga às sociedades modernas

O Buda histórico fundador da religião Budista, usualmente chamado de Buda Shakyamuni, era um príncipe indiano chamado Gautama Siddharta e viveu aproximadamente há 2500 anos na Norte da Índia, actualmente parte do Nepal (Gyatso, 1992). Buda significa “O Desperto” e refere-se ao estado de alguém que acordou do sono da ignorância e vê as coisas como elas realmente são, uma pessoa completamente livre de todas as falhas e obstruções mentais e que desenvolveu todas as suas qualidades. Os Budistas acreditam que todos os seres têm o potencial para alcançar este estado (Gyatso, 1992).

Budismo ou Budadarma é o nome usado para designar os ensinamentos do Buda histórico, bem como as experiências internas ou realizações desses mesmos ensinamentos por parte dos praticantes (Gyatso, 1992). Buda ensinou extensivamente em muitos locais distintos adaptando sempre a apresentação à audiência tendo em conta a sua capacidade e contexto (Gyatso, 1992).

Os ensinamentos Budistas difundiram-se largamente através de duas rotas principais, uma pelo Norte dos Himalaias, incluindo o Tibete, e depois para Este na China até chegar ao Japão e Vietname; a outra pelo Sul incluindo o Sri Lanka, Tailândia, Burma e Cambodja (Meadows, 2003).

Actualmente o Budismo está disponível em todo o mundo. Contribuindo para isto estão vários factores como o aumento da facilidade em viajar, mais e melhores traduções e no caso do Budismo Tibetano, o efeito da deslocação de muitos professores do Tibete para Ocidente como consequência da diáspora Tibetana (Meadows, 2003). Exemplo disto mesmo é Gueshe Kelsang Gyatso, um professor Tibetano que se ordenou monge aos oito anos de idade, prosseguiu estudos nos Mosteiros Budistas sob a orientação do seu mestre Kyabje Trijang Rinpoché até alcançar o título de Gueshe (título académico mais elevado) e se envolveu depois na prática de retiro durante dezoito anos nos Himalaias.

Budismo Kadampa Moderno

Gueshe Kelsang Gyatso acabou por se mudar para Inglaterra para ensinar os Ocidentais a pedido do seu Mestre nos anos 70. Ele é seguidor do Budismo Kadampa, uma Tradição Mahayana especial fundada no Tibete no século XI cuja linhagem vem originalmente do Buda histórico (NKT-IKBU, 2007). O Budismo Kadampa apresenta todos os 84.000 ensinamentos de Buda de uma forma que pode ser integrada na vida diária (Gyatso, 1990).

O Budismo Kadampa está presente no Ocidente através da Nova Tradição Kadampa – União Budista Kadampa Internacional (NKT – IKBU), fundada por Gueshe Kelsang Gyatso. A NKT é uma associação internacional de estudo e prática Budista. O seu propósito é preservar e promover a essência dos ensinamentos de Buda de uma forma que seja adequada ao modo de vida moderno (NKT-IKBU, 2007). A visão da NKT é de que o Budismo tem uma relevância intemporal e universal podendo ser praticado por pessoas de qualquer cultura independentemente da raça, género ou idade (NKT-IKBU, 2007).

A NKT está perfeitamente integrada nas sociedades modernas e conta com mais de 1100 filiais em 40 países por todo o mundo incluindo Portugal continental (Lisboa e Castelo Branco) e ilhas (Funchal). Os centros Budistas NKT são associações sem fins lucrativos que procuram beneficiar as comunidades locais disponibilizando um programa completo de aulas introdutórias, programas de estudo e retiros de

meditação sob a direcção de um Professor Residente qualificado (que pode ser monge/monja ou um/a praticante laico/a) (NKT-IKBU, 2007). Há vários tipos de centros como sejam Centros Budistas Kadampa locais, Centros de Meditação Kadampa regionais ou Centros de Retiro internacionais (NKT-IKBU, 2007). Outros tipos de estruturas também abertas a todos são os World Peace Cafés e World Peace Hotéis, que tal como os Templos Internacionais pretendem exemplificar a prática Budista através do serviço público (NKT-IKBU, 2007).

Budismo Kadampa: Praticar o Budismo integrado na vida diária

Os praticantes Kadampa integram todos os ensinamentos de Buda, o Dharma, na sua vida diária para resolver os seus problemas humanos (Gyatso, 1992). Dharma pode ser traduzido como “protecção” e refere-se à protecção do sofrimento (Gyatso, 2005). Praticar o Dharma significa então aplicar os ensinamentos de Buda às circunstâncias específicas da vida do praticante para superar o sofrimento e alcançar felicidade. Este é o método budista usado para protecção do sofrimento e melhorar a qualidade da vida humana através de alcançar paz interior e felicidade (Gyatso, 2005). O método consiste em examinar a própria mente e verificar que estados produzem sofrimento e quais produzem saúde e felicidade (Gyatso, 2005). Uma vez identificadas as causas de felicidade e sofrimento ultrapassam-se então as mentes não virtuosas e compulsivas que levam a estados de descontentamento e sofrimento e cultivam-se as mentes virtuosas que levam à libertação da dor e ao êxtase da iluminação completa (Gyatso, 2005). No Budismo o conceito de virtude está associado ao que é funcional e conduz à felicidade, enquanto a não virtude ao que é disfuncional e produz sofrimento (Gyatso, 1990). Neste sentido a ética Budista está enraizada numa justificação funcional, não remetendo para uma base de moralidade em si mesma.

A principal ferramenta para cultivar os estados mentais conducentes à paz mental e bem-estar e para erradicar aqueles que não o são é a meditação (Gyatso, 1993).

O que é a Meditação

A meditação é um método para ganhar familiaridade com estados mentais calmos e pacíficos (Gyatso, 2003). Há muitos diferentes tipos de meditação mas de uma forma geral os Kadampas dividem-na em dois tipos principais: meditação analítica e meditação posicionada (Gyatso, 2003). A meditação analítica consiste em contemplar o significado de uma instrução de Darma recebida ou lida com o propósito de encontrar o objecto de meditação (Gyatso, 2003). A meditação posicionada consiste então numa concentração unificada nesse objecto pelo máximo de tempo possível com o propósito de obter maior familiaridade com o objecto (Gyatso, 2003). O objecto de meditação pode ser uma conclusão como por exemplo a determinação de adoptar ou abandonar algo (um comportamento, uma emoção ou uma cognição) mas pode também ser um estado mental virtuoso específico (como uma determinada emoção ou cognição). Os objectos de meditação podem então ser mais orientados para cognições ou emoções estando no entanto estes dois aspectos interligados e seguindo-se como consequência uma alteração do comportamento. Por vezes é cultivada em meditação uma determinada cognição que tem como objectivo a alteração das emoções a ela associadas (de negativas/disfuncionais para positivas/funcionais). Mas parte do treino em meditação consiste também em cultivar essas emoções ou sentimentos específicos. O resultado pretendido será uma alteração da forma como o praticante experiênciã as situações da vida diária, ao nível das cognições e emoções. Alterações de comportamento podem advir das alterações ao nível das cognições e emoções mas não são o *focus* da prática da meditação.

Os objectos de meditação

Os objectos de meditação são aqueles que tornam a mente mais pacífica e

virtuosa (Gyatso, 2003). Há muitos objectos de meditação mas na essência a prática Kadampa caracteriza-se pelas meditações do Lamrim, as etapas do caminho à iluminação (Gyatso, 1990); do Lojong, o treino da mente (Gyatso, 2000); e do Mahamudra Tantra, o caminho rápido à iluminação realizando a natureza da mente (Gyatso, 2005b).

Os objectos de meditação do Lamrim consistem no treino das etapas do caminho à iluminação e são a base para todos os outros objectos de meditação (Gyatso, 1990). A razão para tal é que estabelecem a fundação da Visão Budista Básica e Intenção Budista Básica, uma forma de compreender e lidar com o mundo orientada para o alcançar de metas específicas.

Na visão Budista o corpo e a mente são entidades separadas e, assim, crê-se que apesar do corpo se desintegrar na morte, o *continuum* da mente não é interrompido (Gyatso, 1999). Os Budistas acreditam então na existência de vidas passadas e vidas futuras, o ciclo de renascimentos permeados por sofrimento – Samsara (Gyatso, 1990). A raiz de Samsara é a ignorância do auto-aferro (Gyatso, 1990). Esta ignorância aferra-se à existência do “eu” e outros fenómenos como inerentemente existentes e é vista como a base para desenvolver todos os estados mentais negativos (Gyatso, 1990). Estes estados mentais negativos acarretam um determinado grau de sofrimento mas são também a causa para cometer acções não virtuosas que levam a experimentar sofrimento no futuro. Isto resume a lei do Karma, um exemplo especial da lei de causa e efeito, segundo a qual todas as acções corporais, verbais e mentais são causas, e todas as experiências agradáveis e desagradáveis são os seus efeitos (Gyatso, 1990). Acções virtuosas são vistas como sendo a causa de felicidade futura e acções não-virtuosas como a causa de sofrimento futuro (Gyatso, 1990). A procura de felicidade faz-se então através de ultrapassar os estados mentais negativos, em especial a sua raiz, a ignorância do auto-aferro (Gyatso, 1990).

Embora o Lamrim consista em vinte e um objectos de meditação estes podem-se condensar nos Três Principais Aspectos do Caminho: Renúncia, Bodichita e Visão Correcta da Vacuidade (Gyatso, 1990).

A renúncia é definida como uma mente que serve para acabar com o apego por prazeres mundanos e que busca a libertação pessoal do renascimento em Samsara

(Gyatso, 1990). A renúncia refere-se ao sofrimento das vidas futuras e não aos prazeres, família, amigos, casa ou trabalho (Gyatso, 1990). Ela baseia-se numa compreensão de que desde tempos sem princípio incontáveis renascimentos no Samsara com incontáveis corpos foram experimentados (Gyatso, 1990). A cada vida, os tormentos de adoecer, envelhecer, morrer, ser separado de pessoas queridas e não poder satisfazer os próprios desejos foram experimentados (Gyatso, 1990). Sem atingir a libertação permanente do renascimento contaminado então todos estes sofrimentos serão experimentados repetidamente em incontáveis vidas futuras (Gyatso, 1990). Com base nisto é gerada uma forte determinação de abandonar o apego pelos prazeres mundanos e conquistar libertação permanente dos renascimentos contaminados (Gyatso, 1990). Esta é a base do Budismo Hinayana.

Bodichita é definida como uma mente que, motivada pelo desejo de libertar permanentemente todos os seres vivos do seu sofrimento, busca a iluminação (Gyatso, 2000). A Renúncia é o desejo de se libertar a si mesmo do sofrimento enquanto que a Bodichita abrange não só o próprio mas todos os outros seres (Gyatso, 2000). Desenvolver Bodichita requer treinar em compaixão e amor apreciativo e é a principal prática do Budismo Mahayana (Gyatso, 2000).

Vacuidade, verdade última e natureza última dos fenómenos são sinónimos (Gyatso, 2005b). Por vacuidade não se entende um “nada”, mas sim a real natureza dos fenómenos, o facto de eles serem vazios de existência inerente, ao contrário do que aparentam (Gyatso, 1986). Os fenómenos aparecem à mente como tendo existência verdadeira e com base nessa aparência desenvolve-se a concepção de que existem verdadeiramente, inerentemente – a isto chama-se ignorância do auto-aferro (Gyatso, 1986). Existem dois tipos de auto-aferro: de pessoas e de fenómenos (Gyatso, 1986). O primeiro aferra-se ao “eu” do próprio e ao “eu” dos outros como se fossem verdadeiramente existentes; o segundo aferra-se aos demais fenómenos como se fossem verdadeiramente existentes (Gyatso, 1986). Na visão Budista todos os problemas humanos surgem porque não se compreende a verdade última (Gyatso, 1986). A ignorância do auto-aferro é vista como a fonte de todos os problemas e negatividades, e a única maneira de erradicá-la consiste em realizar a vacuidade directamente (Gyatso, 1986).

Os objectos de meditação do Lojong consistem no treino da mente para transformar adversidades no caminho espiritual de acordo com o percurso Budista Mahayana, o desenvolvimento da motivação de Bodichita (Gyatso, 2000). Estes são essencialmente etapas de treino de desenvolvimento e aperfeiçoamento de sentimentos de amor e compaixão, sentimento de que os outros são importantes e a sua felicidade é importante e o desejo de os libertar do seu sofrimento respectivamente (Gyatso, 2000). A prática da paciência é explicada em detalhe (Gyatso, 2000). Exemplos específicos de situações difíceis que podem ocorrer nas relações com os outros são abordados bem como as suas possíveis soluções a nível interno. Desta forma, as adversidades são aproveitadas para fortalecer o sentimento de amor pelos outros, bem como diminuir e destruir o auto-apreço, o sentimento que o “eu” é mais importante que o outro, bem como o auto-aferro que está na sua origem, a falsa percepção de que há um “eu” inerentemente existente (Gyatso, 2000).

Os objectos de meditação do Mahamudra Tantra são o método específico para atingir a iluminação completa com base na fundação do Lamrim e Lojong (Gyatso, 1994; Gyatso 2005b). Estes consistem em meditações acerca da natureza da mente a serem praticadas com níveis mais subtis da mente de modo a permitir ao praticante realizar directamente a natureza dos fenómenos: a sua vacuidade (Gyatso 1994; Gytaso, 2005b; Gyatso, 1991).

Onde e como praticar a meditação Budista:

Prática na vida diária e prática em retiro

A meditação Budista formal (prática durante uma sessão de meditação em postura sentada) pode ser praticada num centro Budista ou em qualquer outro local. Os praticantes podem envolver-se na sua prática sozinhos ou em grupo. Há diferentes meditações nas quais os praticantes se envolvem com regularidades variadas: mensalmente, quinzenalmente ou diariamente. É também frequente que os praticantes se envolvam ocasionalmente em retiros de meditação para ganhar mais familiaridade com determinadas praticas de meditação ou objectos específicos

Isto é visto como um treino complementar ao da vida diária. Os retiros de meditação podem ser feitos em diversos locais existindo centros de retiros criados para o efeito. A sua duração pode ser de um dia, uma semana ou mais tempo. Num retiro, há uma interrupção dos afazeres e actividades exteriores, a fim de enfatizar determinada prática espiritual (Gyatso, 1990).

Existem três tipos de retiro: físico, verbal e mental; todos devem ter como base uma motivação espiritual, i.e., uma motivação de Renúncia ou Bodichita ou simplesmente o desejo de melhorar a qualidade de vida através de desenvolver paz interior, compaixão e sabedoria (Gyatso, 2003). Retiro físico refere-se ao isolar-se de pessoas, actividades e ruídos e ao abandono de quaisquer ocupações irrelevantes e sem sentido para a prática espiritual (Gyatso, 1990). Retiro verbal refere-se ao abster-se de falar e observar silêncio durante algum tempo (Gyatso, 1990). Retiro mental refere-se ao impedir o surgimento de distrações e de fortes delusões, como apego, raiva, inveja e forte auto-aferro, e manter lembrança contínua e conscienciosidade (Gyatso, 1990). De um ponto de vista Budista retiros físicos e verbais, quando não acompanhados por um retiro mental, têm pouco poder (Gyatso, 1990). Podem até ser relaxantes, mas sem a interrupção de fortes delusões não surgirá paz mental, nem mesmo em retiro (Gyatso, 1990). Contudo, manter os retiros físico e verbal contribui para o sucesso do retiro mental (Gyatso, 1990).

*Porquê praticar meditação Budista e retiro:
Os seus benefícios segundo a perspectiva Budista*

A visão Budista é que felicidade e sofrimento são estados mentais, que tal como todos os fenómenos dependem da mente, não tendo características do seu próprio lado independentemente da mente que os apreende (Gyatso 1994). Segundo esta perspectiva é fácil compreender que os Budistas consideram o treino da mente da maior importância. Treinar a mente é visto como mais benéfico e eficaz do que apenas manipular as circunstâncias externas na busca de uma felicidade duradoura.

A simples meditação na respiração, uma prática preliminar à meditação propriamente dita, é considerada como podendo ser bastante poderosa e eficaz proporcionando experiências de paz mental e contentamento mesmo quando praticada fora do contexto de uma prática espiritual (Gyatso, 2003). O sentimento de contentamento e bem-estar é visto como uma mais-valia para ajudar as pessoas a lidar com o seu dia-a-dia nas suas vidas ocupadas (Gyatso, 2003). Benefícios apontados seriam as situações difíceis tornarem-se mais fáceis de lidar, serem experimentados mais sentimentos positivos em relação aos outros e as relações com eles tornarem-se melhores gradualmente (Gyatso, 2003).

No entanto, os benefícios da meditação integrada numa prática espiritual serão mais profundos e dependerão, na visão Budista, da motivação com a qual o praticante se envolve na prática bem como da sua capacidade (Gyatso, 2003). Os benefícios podem então variar desde o alcançar estados de felicidade temporária, a libertação permanente do sofrimento, Nirvana, ou até a plena iluminação, o estado de Buda (Gyatso, 1990).

Todas as meditações terão como benefício comum tornarem a mente mais pacífica e feliz mas cada uma terá benefícios específicos dependendo do objecto de meditação (Gyatso, 2003). Os benefícios são percebidos como dependendo de múltiplos factores e é sempre enfatizado que uma pessoa se deve envolver na prática de meditação sem expectativas de resultados imediatos pois o treino da mente requer tempo, paciência e familiaridade (Gyatso, 1990).

De acordo com a perspectiva e literatura Budistas os benefícios de praticar meditação em retiro prendem-se especificamente com o ganhar experiência e familiaridade com os objectos de meditação e melhorar o nível de concentração do praticante (Gyatso, 2003). Isto permitirá ao praticante uma melhoria da sua qualidade de vida mesmo depois de sair de retiro através de integrar a experiência que obteve em retiro na sua vivência quotidiana (Gyatso, 1990).

Embora estes sejam os benefícios descritos pelo Budismo não encontrámos dados empíricos que os confirmem ou infirmem. Veremos então de seguida quais os benefícios da meditação segundo a perspectiva da Psicologia de acordo com os dados empíricos e a literatura.

O que sabemos acerca do fenómeno da meditação:
dados empíricos e literatura

A meditação Budista é um fenómeno que foi já alvo de investigação em Psicologia. O Budismo é considerado por alguns autores como a mais psicológica de todas tradições espirituais (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006; Meadows, 2003) e como sendo aquela que mais impacto teve na Psicologia Ocidental (Miovic, 2004).

Diferentes estudos definem a meditação de variadas formas. No entanto atentaremos a este conceito como descrevendo “práticas que auto regulam o corpo e a mente e desta forma afectam os eventos mentais através da envolvimento num set atencional específico” (Cahn & Polich, 2006).

É fácil encontrar estudos que incidam sobre os vários componentes da meditação isoladamente. Contribuindo para isto pode estar a lógica dominante na investigação do método experimental, bem como o recurso a Tradições Budistas cujas práticas se concentrem apenas em alguns aspectos da meditação em detrimento de outros. Seguidamente é apresentado um resumo dos benefícios encontrados de várias componentes ou variantes da meditação.

Os Benefícios da “Mindfulness Meditation”

Dos vários atributos da consciência envolvidos na meditação o mais estudado é provavelmente o “*Mindfulness*” e os métodos escolhidos para o investigar são predominantemente quantitativos. O conceito de *Mindfulness* tem diferentes significados de acordo com as várias abordagens Budistas e da Psicologia. Na tradição Budista em estudo – a NKT- o *Mindfulness* é definido como um factor mental cuja função é não esquecer o objecto realizado pela mente primária (Gyatso, 1993). É considerado como uma parte da mente a ser usada na meditação formal e fora dela para prevenir distrações, mas não como um objecto ou técnica de meditação em si mesmo. Do ponto de vista da psicologia consideraremos a

definição de Lin et al (2007) que refere o seu ênfase em desenvolver uma observação com maior distanciamento e consciência dos conteúdos da consciência.

São conhecidos os benefícios para a saúde e estratégias para lidar com problemas de saúde (Grossman et al 2004). Estudos demonstram um efeito positivo do papel do “*Mindfulness*” contributivo para um bom nível de bem-estar, especificamente comportamento auto-regulado e estados emocionais positivos (Brown & Ryan, 2003). O seu uso em programas de redução de stress revela-se significativamente eficaz (Shapiro, 2005; Shapiro, 1998).

A técnica da *Mindfulness Meditation* tem também sido usada como ferramenta para uso terapêutico. A sua associação com a Terapia Cognitivo-Comportamental deu origem à *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy*, usada entre outros fins para programas de prevenção de *depression relapse* (Segal et al, 2001). Há várias outras psicoterapias “*Mindfulness-Based*” (Melbourne Academic Mindfulness Group, 2006) a serem usadas com resultados optimistas e explora-se o seu uso no tratamento a pacientes em recuperação de abuso de substâncias (Alterman et al, 2004).

Outros aspectos da meditação foram alvo de exportação para uso terapêutico. Um exemplo disto são as meditações em objectos de compaixão.

Meditação na Compaixão

À semelhança do que se referiu para o conceito de *Mindfulness*, também a compaixão é conceptualizada diferentemente nas várias abordagens budistas e da psicologia. De acordo com a visão budista da NKT compaixão é uma mente virtuosa que deseja que os seres vivos sejam livres do sofrimento, com base num sentimento de amor e de acordo com a cognição que a sua felicidade é importante (Gyatso, 1988). Kristeller & Johnson (2005) reconhecem que quando a meditação é enquadrada num contexto de abertura do coração e sintonização com as necessidades dos outros, então sentimentos de compaixão poderão emergir fortemente e ser acompanhados de acções.

O recurso ao uso da meditação na compaixão como ferramenta terapêutica pela

psicologia é inegável. Linehan (2007) reconhece a importância do desenvolvimento da capacidade de sentir auto-compaixão, recorrendo também à meditação na respiração na *Dialectical Behaviour Therapy* (DBT) muito usada no acompanhamento do Distúrbio de Personalidade *Borderline* (Linehan, 2007). Gilbert & Procter (2006) desenvolveram o *Compassionate Mind Training* (CMT), destinado a pacientes com níveis elevados de vergonha e auto-criticismo cujos problemas tendem a ser crónicos e que apresentam dificuldades de auto-aceitação e sentimentos calorosos dirigidos ao próprio. Este programa de intervenção demonstrou ser eficaz na redução significativa da depressão, ansiedade, auto-criticismo, vergonha, inferioridade e comportamento submisso; bem como um aumento significativo na capacidade dos participantes de se acalmarem por si mesmos e de se focarem em sentimentos calorosos e de tranquilizantes para o *self* (Gilbert & Procter, 2006). Gilbert (2005) explora ainda várias ligações possíveis entre as meditações Budistas na compaixão com recurso a visualizações e imagética (neste caso Avalokiteshvara, o Buda da Compaixão) e os vários tipos de vinculação.

Explorou-se também o uso de meditação na compaixão combinado com treino em Mindfulness no tratamento de alguns tipos de depressão e outras perturbações (Allen & Knight, 2005 cit por Gilbert & Procter, 2006).

Numa lógica inversa à da diminuição da patologia aparecem estudos que relacionam a meditação com a melhoria do bem-estar, ou seja, como potenciadora e estados mentais e emocionais positivos. Estes estudos podem ser considerados como fazendo parte de uma crescente vaga de interesse no estudo do bem-estar psicológico e contrariam a negligência que tem havido em estudar as causas e consequências do funcionamento humano positivo (Ryff, 1989).

Meditação, Bem-Estar e Psicologia Positiva

Ao contrário da tendência dominante da psicologia clínica de se focar maioritariamente no diagnóstico e tratamento da doença mental a Psicologia Positiva assume interesse pelo óptimo funcionamento humano (Ryff & Singer, 1998). Assiste-se então a uma mudança de paradigma da resolução ou remoção de

problemas para o cultivar das qualidades positivas dos indivíduos e sociedades (Carruthers et al, 2005). Também o Budismo tradicionalmente se foca não só em identificar e tratar os problemas psicológicos mas também em cultivar estados excepcionais de bem-estar (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

A definição do bem-estar enquanto conceito tem sofrido alterações ao longo do tempo. Dierendonck e Mohan (2006) falam de um funcionamento psicológico óptimo. Ryff (1989) aponta alguns aspectos chave como auto aceitação, relações positivas com os outros, autonomia, mestria do ambiente envolvente, sentido de propósito na vida, e crescimento pessoal e desenvolveu escalas validadas de bem-estar (Dierendonck, 2005). Mannel (1999) refere a popularidade de medidas como a satisfação com a vida para aferir o bem-estar e menciona outros aspectos como bem-estar psicológico e a felicidade.

Relacionado com as estratégias de procura do bem-estar Wallace e Shapiro (2006) expõem vários aspectos do Budismo que parecem ser suportados pela investigação psicológica mais recente. Exemplos disto são: o pressuposto Budista de que a felicidade obtida através de estados mentais positivos cultivados através de treino específico, como a meditação, é mais duradoura que aquela obtida através dos prazeres sensoriais; a noção de que o nível de felicidade passível de ser experimentado por qualquer pessoa não está predefinido mas pode ser treinado e aumentado; as fontes de felicidade que conduziriam ao bem-estar desejado são frequentemente mal identificadas pelas pessoas apoiando a teoria Budista de que é devido à própria confusão e ignorância que as pessoas falham em alcançar felicidade duradoura; a prática Budista do contentamento é apoiada por estudos indicando que tentar alcançar um estado interno de bem-estar exclusivamente através de condições externas perfeitas, resulta em níveis mais baixos de satisfação, e que em comparação um estado de bem-estar é alcançado por aqueles que se satisfazem quando as condições externas atingem um determinado nível considerado aceitável em função dos seus valores internos; estudos com base no constructo teórico de *flow* de Csikszentmihayi (1990, cit por Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) relacionam-no na literatura com estados de felicidade que advêm de uma atenção profunda e envolvência numa actividade. Pode-se considerar que estas características podem estar presentes na prática de meditação Budista e

consequentemente é possível que os benefícios descritos possam estar associados à prática de meditação se levada a cabo nestas condições.

A meditação Budista combina o cultivar de um estado mental de profunda atenção e concentração com elevados níveis de relaxamento, relacionando alguns autores esta combinação com um resultado de benefícios para a saúde e bem-estar físico e mental (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006).

Emmons (1986 cit por Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) identificou que ter aspirações e objectivos claros e bem definidos que não entram em conflito entre si e fazer progresso para os alcançar são factores precursores de bem-estar subjectivo e felicidade. Considerando a meditação no contexto de uma prática espiritual/religiosa budista é possível que os benefícios mencionados lhe estejam associados.

Investigação crescente confirma a associação entre a espiritualidade e o bem-estar (Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006). Exploramos seguidamente ao nível da literatura as eventuais ligações entre meditação e bem-estar espiritual.

Meditação e Bem-Estar Espiritual

O bem-estar espiritual pode ser definido como “um elevado nível de fé, esperança, e compromisso em relação a uma visão do mundo bem definida ou sistema de crença que proporciona um significado e propósito para a existência em geral, e que oferece um caminho ético para a realização pessoal que inclui ligação com o próprio, outros, e um poder superior ou realidade mais alargada” (Hawks cit por Heintzman & Mannel, 2003). A prática da meditação Budista no contexto de uma prática espiritual pode ser conducente a uma melhoria do bem-estar espiritual dado que os elementos presentes na definição são elementos cultivados pela visão Budista que serve de contexto à prática da meditação.

Os benefícios do bem-estar espiritual estão também associados a estratégias de coping que diminuem ou neutralizam o impacto negativo de factores de *stress* que prejudicam a saúde mental e física (Pargment cit por Heintzman e Mannel, 2003).

Meditação Budista, Coping e Prevenção de Burnout

Emery & Pargament (2004) definem *Coping* como “esforços para compreender e lidar com situações críticas da vida”. É sabido que os indivíduos que encontram dificuldades em compreender o significado e propósito dos seus problemas frequentemente procuram orientação no meio espiritual (Graham et al, 2001). São conhecidos os benefícios das práticas espirituais e religiosas em termos de *coping* com eventos críticos negativos na vida das pessoas (Heintzamn & Mannel, 2003; Emery & Pargament, 2004; Weaver et al, 2003). É reconhecida a mais valia que as técnicas de *Mindfulness Meditation* podem representar a este nível (Lin et al, 2007). A meditação enquanto técnica, associada à visão Budista do mundo, é usada pelos praticantes Budistas como estratégia de *coping* para compreender e lidar com situações críticas da vida. No entanto pouco sabemos acerca deste processo.

Estudos demonstram também que a espiritualidade pessoal e integrada pode moderar os efeitos do stress causado por situações negativas críticas e pelas contrariedades do dia-a-dia (Fabricatore & Handal, 2000). A meditação budista é também usada pelos praticantes Budistas como estratégia de *coping* para as contrariedades do dia-a-dia, especialmente tendo em conta não só a meditação por si só, mas em particular os objectos de meditação específicos para transformar adversidades no caminho espiritual (objectos de meditação de Lojong).

O desenvolvimento pessoal foi também relacionado com a prevenção do *burnout* (Dierendonck & Vesser, 2005). Novamente referimos que os praticantes Budistas recorrem à meditação como estratégia de *coping* e prevenção de *burnout* mas que nada sabemos acerca deste processo pois não há dados empíricos acerca do processo.

O que não sabemos acerca da meditação Budista e a experiência de estar em retiro

O tema deste estudo foi introduzido como sendo a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Uma breve introdução do Budismo foi levada a cabo contextualizando também o aparecimento da NKT, aqui apresentada enquanto tradição budista presente e integrada nas sociedades modernas, justificando-se ainda a sua escolha neste estudo. De acordo com a literatura da NKT foram apresentados aspectos essenciais da visão budista do mundo explicitando conceitos e práticas. Aspectos relevantes em relação ao fenómeno de retiro foram definidos, em particular incidindo sobre a prática de meditação e os seus benefícios do ponto de vista da NKT. Seguidamente foi feita uma revisão da literatura da psicologia em que se abordam os dados empíricos e literatura existente acerca dos aspectos, componentes e técnicas de meditação. Reflectimos agora sobre estes benefícios genéricos da meditação e se dependerão do tipo de religião/espiritualidade na qual a prática de meditação esteja inserida, da forma do indivíduo ou grupo praticarem, ou ainda da importância que isto assuma nas suas vidas (Zinnbauer et al, 1999). Sabemos também que técnicas de meditação espiritual usada com fins terapêuticos podem ser mais eficazes do que técnicas de meditação de relaxação sem componentes espirituais (Wachholtz & Pargament, 2005).

Por outro lado, ao pensar nos eventuais benefícios da prática de meditação budista como religião ou espiritualidade não podemos deixar de considerar que estes dependerão do tipo de meditação budista em causa, da forma como é praticada por determinado indivíduo ou grupo e da saliência que esta prática tenha na vida do/s praticante/s.

A prática da meditação em retiro pressupõe um nível de envolvimento mais intenso que a sua prática no dia-a-dia e implica por parte do praticante um elevado nível de motivação e empenho, ainda que seja pontual e não o continuado no

tempo como uma prática diária. Considera-se que o estudo da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação Budista ajudará a clarificar o fenómeno da meditação e dos processos psicológicos que lhe estão associados. O interesse deste estudo são então os aspectos qualitativos da experiência dos indivíduos que praticam meditação budista em retiro e os processos psicológicos a ela associados tendo em conta a experiência como um todo. Mas mais do que identificar diferentes aspectos da experiência interessa também perceber como se relacionam eles entre si. E interessam todos os possíveis aspectos da experiência, quaisquer que eles se revelem sem estarem definidos à partida pelo investigador. Pretende-se manter uma abordagem aberta que permita ao fenómeno emergir da experiência dos meditadores e dar-se a conhecer ao investigador de forma o mais espontânea possível. Seguidamente apresenta-se então este estudo no que são as suas características específicas.

Apresentação do estudo:

Meditação Budista, Retiros e Fenomenologia

Este estudo tem uma natureza exploratória e carácter qualitativo. Isto para que não se percam elementos que à partida não apareceriam caso o foco do estudo fosse direccionado a um ou outro aspecto da experiência.

Sendo um método “um caminho que leva ao seu objectivo” (Kvale, 1996) e tendo em consideração que o objectivo são os significados da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista escolheu-se então um método apropriado: o Método Fenomenológico Aplicado à Psicologia.

A escolha do método justifica-se também com algumas semelhanças entre Budismo e fenomenologia no que são alguns pontos-chave das filosofias que lhes servem de base. Estas podem promover uma melhor compreensão do fenómeno em estudo dada a proximidade entre alguns conceitos independentemente das muitas diferenças que lhes reconhecamos. Ambos a Fenomenologia e o Budismo reconhecem a importância crítica de estudar o reino fenomenológico (dos

fenómenos) para compreender a consciência. Independentemente dos objectos que dão origem aos fenómenos serem considerados reais, imaginários ou ilusórios é certo que a experiência dos sujeitos se constrói com base neles e por essa razão consideraremos importante o seu estudo no presente trabalho.

O método Fenomenológico procura clarificar situações vividas pelas pessoas no seu dia-a-dia (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003a). Isto não é feito através de reduzir o fenómeno a um número de variáveis identificáveis e controlar o contexto no qual o fenómeno será estudado, o que no caso do fenómeno de retiro de meditação budista seria impraticável se queremos aceder aos significados da experiência. Pelo contrário, o método Fenomenológico procura permanecer tão fiel quanto possível ao fenómeno em estudo, ao contexto no qual ele aparece no mundo e á forma como é percebido e vivido pelos participantes da experiência (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003c).

Neste caso procura-se clarificar a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista, ir além dos benefícios associados à meditação e descobrir os elementos constituintes da experiência e as relações entre eles. No processo identificar os constituintes chave da experiência, i.e, aqueles aspectos da experiência que definem a sua essência e sem os quais ela colapsaria e não seria reconhecível enquanto fenómeno (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003b).

Pode-se considerar que este é um estudo exploratório e segue o método Fenomenológico aplicado à psicologia de Giorgi (Giorgi & Girogi, 2003b).

Não há hipóteses, há um problema: conhecer os significados da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. A pergunta que orientou o estudo é então:

“Como é vivida pelos participantes a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista?”

MÉTODO

Participantes

A população alvo deste estudo são os praticantes Budistas da NKT que se envolvem em retiro de meditação.

Para aceder à amostra recorreu-se ao principal Centro de Retiros da NKT: O Tharpaland *Internacional Retreat Centre* (IRC). Este Centro foi fundado em 1985 e situa-se numa floresta Escocesa, entre colinas verdejantes e ribeiros. O IRC Tharpaland consiste numa infra-estrutura que proporciona todas as condições necessárias para a actividade de retiro numa atmosfera de beleza natural, paz e silêncio. Tharpaland permite a participação em retiros de grupo guiados para praticantes de todos os níveis de experiência, bem como a realização de retiros solitários (individuais) para praticantes Budistas que pratiquem no contexto da NKT. Nos retiros individuais cada praticante escolhe o tema de retiro e está autónomo. Estes têm durações variadas de dias, semanas, meses ou anos. Os retiros de grupo têm um tema, havendo sessões de ensinamentos e meditações guiadas pelo Mestre de Meditação residente no centro. Estes têm também durações variadas desde fins-de-semana, uma semana, um mês ou retiro de Inverno (quatro meses). Desde que foi fundado, por Tharpaland passaram já milhares de pessoas de todo o mundo. A conduta a seguir é a de respeitar a disciplina moral Budista e inclui também a observação de silêncio total (ANEXO A).

A escolha deste centro de retiros segue um critério que se relaciona com o fenómeno em estudo: a experiência da meditação Budista no contexto de uma prática espiritual/religiosa e integrada na sociedade moderna. Procuravam-se então

praticantes de meditação das sociedades modernas, que se envolvessem em retiros de meditação budista e que se considerassem praticantes Budistas. Este centro é por excelência um local de acesso a tais praticantes, dado que a participação em retiros é autorizada mediante candidatura do praticante. Neste processo é necessário preencher uma ficha de inscrição com informações acerca da experiência do praticante. Também se pede confirmação por parte do Professor Residente do Centro onde o praticante estuda de que ele está preparado para se envolver em retiro. O critério é flexível e varia consoante o nível do retiro, a sua duração e restrições associadas.

O processo de amostragem foi feito com recurso a informante – o Venerável Kelsang Tarchin – monge budista e mestre de retiro residente em Tharpaland. Para o efeito foi enviada uma carta de apresentação por e-mail. Pedia-se a autorização do professor responsável pelo centro para ter acesso a participantes de um retiro de grupo. Explicava-se que o objectivo do estudo consistia em estudar qualitativamente a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista e que o método a seguir seria o método Fenomenológico aplicado à psicologia, de Giorgi, com recurso a entrevistas. Foi entregue aos participantes uma carta de apresentação do estudo solicitando a sua colaboração (ANEXO B). O mestre de retiro e a coordenadora pedagógica informaram então acerca da identidade dos participantes que estavam disponíveis a participar. Estes fizeram parte de um retiro de grupo de Lamrim: “Os Três Principais Aspectos do Caminho”. Este retiro incide sobre objectos de meditação fundamentais para a prática Budista Kadampa e é bastante popular. Teve a duração de uma semana e decorreu em Maio de 2007.

A amostra é então constituída por seis participantes: quatro do sexo feminino e dois do sexo masculino; com idades que variam entre os vinte e nove e os sessenta e nove anos (um participante não forneceu esta informação). Dois participantes são praticantes budistas ordenados (um monge e uma monja). Os restantes quatro são praticantes budistas laicos (um participante do sexo masculino e três do sexo feminino). Os participantes são oriundos de vários países ocidentais: Alemanha, Escócia, Estados Unidos da América e Canadá.

Segue-se uma breve descrição de cada um dos participantes de acordo com as informações que facultaram acerca deles próprios:

P1 é uma mulher acima dos 50 anos (embora não tenha referido a sua idade no questionário). É de nacionalidade britânica (Escócia). Actualmente está reformada, a sua profissão era enfermeira. P1 considera-se budista e é uma praticante ordenada, uma monja com aproximadamente um ano de ordenação. Tem experiência de retiro tendo participado em pelo menos dois retiros longos de Inverno e retiros curtos em Tharpaland. É a segunda vez que faz este retiro de uma semana dos “Três Principais Aspectos do Caminho” em Tharpaland. Foi-lhe pedido recentemente que se torne professora residente de um centro de Dharma na Escócia.

P2 é um homem de 69 anos de idade, de nacionalidade dupla canadiana e britânica. É psicólogo clínico e professor de psicologia das religiões numa universidade do Canadá. Considera-se budista e é um praticante laico. Tem experiência de retiros longos e curtos em Tharpaland.

P3 é uma mulher de 47 anos de idade, de nacionalidade Britânica (Escócia). Está actualmente reformada. Considera-se budista e é uma praticante laica. Esteve anteriormente em Tharpaland.

P4 é um homem de 48 anos de idade, de nacionalidade alemã. Na altura da entrevista residia no centro de retiros Tharpaland, estando em retiro há aproximadamente 5 anos; anteriormente era engenheiro informático. Considera-se budista e é um praticante ordenado, um monge. Tem experiência de retiro solitário e de grupo em Tharpaland.

P5 é uma mulher de 43 anos de idade e de nacionalidade americana. Actualmente faz trabalho voluntário. Considera-se budista e é uma praticante laica.

P6 é uma mulher de 29 anos e é de nacionalidade alemã. Trabalha como professora de Yoga e terapeuta de *Bowen*, além de ser licenciada em Antropologia. Considera-se budista e é uma praticante laica. Tem experiência de retiro longo de Inverno em Tharpaland.

Procedimento:

Todas as seis entrevistas foram realizadas no Kadampa Meditation Centre (KMC) Manjushri em Ulverston, Inglaterra. Destas cinco foram realizadas em Maio dado que os participantes ao saírem de retiro se deslocaram a este centro para assistir ao Festival Budista Internacional de Primavera. Nesta data não foi possível ter acesso a uma sala e devido às condições atmosféricas não foi possível realizar as entrevistas ao ar livre. A solução encontrada foi então utilizar um automóvel como espaço para realizar as entrevistas. Isto obrigou a um maior cuidado com os participantes para que estes se sentissem confortáveis pois a investigadora estava no seu espaço físico íntimo. Não se observou constrangimento por parte dos participantes que aceitaram bem as condições menos ideais nas quais foram conduzidas as entrevistas. Dois dos cinco participantes entrevistados nestas condições, o monge e a monja, tinham conhecido já a investigadora no centro de retiros. Uma entrevista foi realizada em Agosto durante o Festival Budista Internacional de Verão dado que só nesta data se verificou a disponibilidade por parte da sexta participante. Nesta data foi possível usar o Templo de meditação como local para conduzir a entrevista, no intervalo das actividades.

Seguindo-se as sugestões de Kvale (1996) os entrevistados foram preparados antes da entrevista. Houve o cuidado de lhes apresentar o objectivo do estudo: conhecer a sua experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Foi-lhes dito que não havia um conjunto de perguntas predefinidas mas que se iria falar de forma informal acerca de como foi para ele/a a experiência de estar em retiro. Foi clarificado que podiam falar do que achassem apropriado ou se sentissem

confortáveis. Também foram informados que a entrevista seria gravada (áudio) e posteriormente transcrita, sendo toda a informação pessoal e as suas identidades mantidas confidenciais. Foi-lhes pedido que preenchessem um questionário demográfico (ANEXO C) e que lessem e assinassem uma declaração autorizando o uso dos dados para investigação (ANEXO D) e só então se procedeu à entrevista.

As entrevistas foram conduzidas em inglês e com uma estrutura aberta. No início foi pedido que descrevessem a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação. De acordo com o que surgia por parte de cada participante foram então feitas mais perguntas. Nestas entrevistas o entrevistador assumiu uma postura de “*bracketing*” do conhecimento previamente adquirido acerca do fenómeno de forma a encontrá-lo fresco, ou seja, foi adoptada uma postura de temporariamente não considerar os conhecimentos *a priori* do investigador de modo a não influenciar o rumo da entrevista e consequentemente todos os dados (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003b). Neste sentido o investigador seguiu também um “*existential index*”, isto é, considerou o que é dado precisamente da forma como é dado, como aparece, como uma mera presença ou fenómeno (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003b).

No final da entrevista foi-lhes dada a oportunidade de acrescentar algo se assim o quisessem. O gravador foi então desligado e a investigadora continuou a falar com os participantes durante algum tempo para progressivamente terminar o encontro, talvez mencionando alguns dos pontos que havia aprendido na entrevista. O estudo foi explicado em maior detalhe e respondidas as perguntas que pudessem ter.

Após a entrevista a investigadora tomou notas de alguns aspectos tais como referencias à voz, expressões corporais, a impressão geral deixada pelo participante na interacção interpessoal. Esta informação foi valorizada como fonte de informação para o processo posterior de análise das transcrições.

A duração média das entrevistas foi de 32 minutos (mínimo 27:51min e máximo 39:20min), sendo que o total de todas é de 192:7 minutos.

Os dados obtidos através das entrevistas transcritas (ANEXO E) foram tratados

de acordo com o método Fenomenológico seguindo um processo gradual em quatro passos:

- 1) Foram lidas todas as entrevistas;
- 2) Cada entrevista foi dividida em unidades de significado;
- 3) Foi tornado explícito o significado psicológico das descrições realizadas em linguagem de senso comum dos participantes, em linguagem da atitude natural;
- 4) Finalmente o fenómeno foi expresso numa (ou mais) estrutura de acordo com os componentes das unidades que foram considerados como essenciais para a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista, i.e., as estruturas traduzem a essência psicológica do fenómeno (Giorgi, 2003 #6).

Instrumentos

Dois instrumentos foram usados: um questionário demográfico criado para o efeito (ANEXO C) e a técnica de entrevista.

O questionário demográfico recolhe informação genérica acerca dos praticantes (nome, idade, género, ocupação, nacionalidade). Pergunta-se ainda numa lógica de resposta de sim ou não se: o praticante é ordenado (monge ou monja); se se considera budista.

A entrevista é exploratória, de estrutura aberta e segue o carácter do método Fenomenológico aplicado à psicologia.

A prioridade da entrevista estava no “como” ao invés do “porquê”; interessava saber “o que aconteceu?” e “como aconteceu?” Quando foi utilizado o “porquê” procurava-se clarificar algum aspecto da experiência ou motivação mas não levar a conceptualizações acerca da experiência do participante.

A entrevista procurou desencadear por parte do participante uma descrição da sua experiência de estar em retiro budista de meditação. Spradley (1979, cit por Kvale, 1996) expressa o que é uma abordagem fenomenológica aberta à

aprendizagem através do entrevistado:

"I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?" (pp34)

Materiais

O único material usado para a recolha de dados foi um gravador de voz digital Olympus VN-1100PC.

APRESENTAÇÃO E ANÁLISE DE DADOS

Os quatro passos da análise de dados do Método Fenomenológico aplicado à psicologia serão brevemente sumariados bem como a sua aplicação aos dados deste estudo em particular. Os dados foram trabalhados na versão original em Inglês desde o passo 1 ao passo 4 do Método Fenomenológico Aplicado à Psicologia de Giorgi (2003) pois pretendia-se preservar ao máximo o seu significado e considerou-se que uma tradução dos dados numa fase inicial prejudicaria este objectivo.

Passo 1:

Após serem transcritos os dados de todas as entrevistas (ANEXO E) foram então lidas todas as transcrições para se ter uma noção do todo;

Passo 2:

Todas as transcrições foram divididas em unidades de significado. Para tal as transcrições foram lidas novamente e a cada vez que foi notada uma alteração no significado psicológico do que é dito pelo participante demarcou-se uma nova unidade de significado.

O passo 2 da análise dos dados não será aqui apresentado mas pode ser consultada em anexo juntamente com o passo 3 (ANEXO F).

No entanto para clarificar como se acharam as unidades de significado será

apresentado a título de exemplo a divisão das três primeiras unidades de significado da entrevista da Participante 1.

Transcrição Entrevista P1	Comentário
<p>I: Thank you so much for accepting to talk to me and...I wonder if you can tell me, try to describe the experience of being on this retreat, the...</p> <p>P1: It's actually...The experience of being on retreat for me it's absolutely wonderful because I love retreat.</p>	<p>Primeira unidade de significado significado psicológico: relacionado com sentimentos positivos experimentados</p>
<p>I find I progress, you know? Quite quickly and the meditations are very deep</p>	<p>Segunda unidade de significado houve uma alteração de significado psicológico: relacionado com a percepção de aumento de nível de mestria e concentração</p>
<p>but also at the same time a lot of, I call them "gremlins", you know? Delusions and self-grasping, come up very very strongly for me</p>	<p>Terceira unidade de significado houve novamente uma alteração de significado psicológico: relacionado com o experimentar e estar consciente de cognições/emoções negativas ou disfuncionais</p>

No exemplo dado é feito um comentário à alteração de significado identificada no decorrer do discurso. Contudo, isto é feito com o propósito de clarificar e exemplificar o processo pois de acordo com o Método Fenomenológico aplicado á psicologia de Giorgi nesta fase neste passo apenas se dividem as unidades de significado sem ser necessário deixar um registo justificativo.

Passo 3:

Uma vez encontradas as unidades de significado de todas as transcrições foi tornado explícito o significado psicológico dessas mesmas unidades. Para tal as descrições realizadas na linguagem natural dos participantes foram transformadas em linguagem da psicologia com o objectivo de tornar explícito os processos e significado psicológico do que é dito pelos participantes.

O passo 3 da análise dos dados não será aqui apresentado mas pode ser consultada em anexo (ANEXO F). No entanto, para clarificar como se transformaram as unidades de significado da linguagem natural dos participantes em linguagem da psicologia será apresentado a título de exemplo a transformação das três primeiras unidades de significado da entrevista da Participante 1, as mesmas usadas para clarificar o Passo 2 anteriormente.

Unidades de Significado	Significado Psicológico
<p>I: Thank you so much for accepting to talk to me and...I wonder if you can tell me, try to describe the experience of being on this retreat, the...</p> <p>P1: It's actually...The experience of being on retreat for me it's absolutely wonderful because I love retreat.</p>	<p>P1 experiences positive feelings of enjoyment while on retreat</p>
<p>I find I progress, you know? Quite quickly and the meditations are very deep</p>	<p>P1 perceives her level of mastery in meditation improving at quick pace while on retreat, going into deeper levels of awareness and concentration.</p>
<p>but also at the same time a lot of, I call them "gremlins", you know? Delusions and self-grasping, come up very very strongly for me</p>	<p>P1 experiences with great awareness and increased intensity her own distorted perceptions and maladjusted emotional responses . For P1 although they appear to be harmless they are on the contrary quite negative and harmful. In particular P1 mentions a type of ignorance through which the consciousness grasps at the existence of the self that appears to it as inherently existent.</p>

Neste passo houve especial precaução dado que os participantes não usam apenas linguagem do senso comum mas mais especificamente uma linguagem específica do contexto budista da NKT. Desta linguagem fazem parte palavras em sânscrito (Ex.: Karma) e tibetano (Ex.: Lamrim).

As especificidades da linguagem utilizada pelos participantes levanta então algumas questões, nomeadamente:

Os termos sânscritos e tibetanos remetem para conceitos que podem não existir na cultura ocidental e é necessário o investigador ter conhecimento dos mesmos (Ex.: Karma, Lojong, Lamrim, Mahamudra, etc.);

Muitos termos budistas (em sânscrito, tibetano ou traduzidos) exprimem ideias complexas que podem ter mais do que um significado dependendo do contexto em que são usados);

Os participantes podem usar termos budistas sem lhes atribuírem os significados budistas presentes na própria literatura budista, isto é, podem atribuir-lhes outros significados por várias razões (incompreensão, ignorância, não concordância, interpretação pessoal, etc.);

No decorrer da entrevista os participantes nem sempre explicitam o que significa para eles determinado termo utilizado e tão-pouco o investigador pode pedir clarificação sempre que é usado um destes termos pois as entrevistas são de curta duração.

Apesar do conhecimento que se possa ter dos significados da linguagem do contexto budista em termos gerais, através da literatura da NKT, houve ainda assim o cuidado de verificar se os participantes explicitam os significados que atribuem aos termos budistas que usam no seu discurso. Sempre que os significados não tenham sido explicitados directamente ou que não tenha havido oportunidade para o investigador solicitar clarificação então adoptou-se uma postura essencialmente descritiva mais do que interpretativa na análise dos dados.

Um glossário em português com termos usados nesta linguagem do contexto Budista pode ser encontrado em anexo (ANEXO G).

Passo 4:

Finalmente o fenómeno foi expresso em três estruturas de acordo com os componentes das unidades que foram considerados como essenciais para a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Encontradas as estruturas, estas foram então traduzidas para português; as estruturas apresentadas encontram-se na versão traduzida mas a versão original pode ser consultada em anexo (ANEXO H).

Estruturas da experiência

O passo 4 revelou então três estruturas da experiência para os seis participantes. Para quatro dos participantes as unidades de significado essenciais revelaram uma estrutura idêntica, pois as diferenças que possam haver não foram consideradas significativas. Estas tinham a ver com conteúdos específicos dos constituintes mas os próprios constituintes e a forma como se articulam foi considerada idêntica no essencial da experiência. Para os outros dois participantes na análise das unidades de significado essenciais encontramos a maioria dos constituintes essenciais da experiência presentes na estrutura partilhada pelos outros quatro. No entanto, figuram também constituintes que não se encontram nessa estrutura e que têm um nível elevado de significância na construção do significado da experiência destes participantes. A análise das unidades de significado essenciais revelou então uma estrutura única para cada um destes dois participantes. Duas razões justificam esta diferenciação. Por um lado, em ambos os protocolos destes participantes, há a ocorrência de um constituinte da experiência que não figura em nenhuma unidade de significado dos restantes quatro participantes. O significado psicológico deste constituinte foi considerado muito significativo. Por este motivo considerou-se haver justificação para que a experiência destes participantes não fosse expressa pela mesma estrutura dos outros quatro. Por outro lado, também as diferenças relativamente um ao outro eram suficientes para que se justificasse uma estrutura singular e específica para

cada um deles. Esta diferença reside na forma como se articula o conjunto das unidades de significado, que são as mesmas para ambos.

Apresentam-se então de seguida as três estruturas encontradas para “A Experiência de Estar em Retiro de Meditação Budista”.

Estrutura da Experiência A (P1, P3, P5 & P6)

Para estes participantes o papel e presença do mestre de retiro e da comunidade espiritual são muito importantes. Os participantes sentem-se amados pelo mestre de retiro, sentem-no como seguro/de confiança e reconhecem-lhe competências para os guiar no melhoramento da sua experiência de ser, reconhecendo qualidades semelhantes na comunidade espiritual. Esta confiança juntamente com as condições externas de retiro permite-lhes deixarem-se guiar num processo de auto-monitorização dos seus próprios padrões cognitivos, emocionais e comportamentais tornando-se gradualmente mais conscientes destes. Alguns sofrimento e desconforto são experienciados no processo dado que emoções negativas e cognições disfuncionais são encaradas sem distrações ou escapes. O seu nível de auto-consciência aumenta e experienciam também profundos *insights* acerca dos seus processos mentais. Treinam em identificar e discriminar entre cognições funcionais e disfuncionais para alterar as emoções experienciadas como sua consequência e alterar também comportamentos subsequentes, todos estes de disfuncionais para funcionais e mais positivos. Treinam também em alterar crenças e significados atribuídos a estímulos externos e internos. A meditação é a principal ferramenta para integrar novos significados que desejam atribuir à sua experiência de ser e estar no mundo com a sua experiência pessoal prévia. Fazer parte de um grupo é reconhecido como significativo para a qualidade da experiência. São encontrados indicadores de progresso no seu treino espiritual tais como melhor entendimento intelectual, níveis mais elevados de concentração e menor intensidade de cognições disfuncionais e emoções negativas que lhes estão associadas, isto é transportado para a experiência pós-retiro. Durante o retiro focam-se no processo e não em expectativas de resultados, experimentando sentimentos positivos e níveis elevados de paz interior.

Estrutura da Experiência B (P2)

Para este participante o papel e presença do mestre de retiro têm uma importância central. P2 sente-se amado pelo mestre de retiro, sente-o como seguro/de confiança e reconhecem-lhe competências para o guiar no melhoramento da sua experiência de ser, reconhecendo qualidades semelhantes na comunidade espiritual. Esta confiança juntamente com as condições externas de retiro permite-lhe deixar-se guiar num processo de auto-monitorização dos seus próprios padrões cognitivos, emocionais e comportamentais tornando-se gradualmente mais consciente destes. Algum sofrimento e desconforto são experienciados no processo dado que emoções negativas e cognições disfuncionais são encaradas sem distrações ou escapes. Algum sofrimento e desconforto são experienciados no processo dado que emoções negativas e cognições disfuncionais são encaradas sem distrações ou escapes. O seu nível de auto-consciência aumenta e experiencia também profundos *insights* acerca dos seus processos mentais. Treina em identificar e discriminar entre cognições funcionais e disfuncionais para alterar as emoções experienciadas como sua consequência e alterar também comportamentos subsequentes, todos estes de disfuncionais para funcionais e mais positivos. Treina também em alterar crenças e significados atribuídos a estímulos externos e internos. A meditação é a principal ferramenta para integrar novos significados que deseja atribuir à sua experiência de ser e estar no mundo com a sua experiência pessoal prévia. Fazer parte de um grupo é reconhecido como significativo para a qualidade da experiência. P2 experiencia momentos de percepção de perda de controlo dos seus processos mentais com desconforto e ansiedade. A confiança no mestre de retiro funciona como uma rede de segurança nestes episódios e ele lida com as emoções negativas alterando as suas cognições através da meditação. P2 identifica indicadores de progresso no seu treino espiritual tais como elevados níveis de concentração e menor intensidade de cognições disfuncionais e emoções negativas associadas, estes são experimentados durante e após o retiro.

Estrutura da Experiência C (P4)

Para este participante, que tem muita experiência em retiro solitário, o seu papel no processo de alteração da qualidade da sua experiência tem uma importância central. Também importante é o papel e presença do mestre de retiro. P2 sente-se amado pelo mestre de retiro, sente-o como seguro/de confiança e reconhece-lhe competências para o guiar no melhoramento da sua experiência de ser, reconhecendo qualidades semelhantes na comunidade espiritual. Esta confiança juntamente com as condições externas de retiro permite-lhe deixar-se guiar num processo de auto-monitorização dos seus próprios padrões cognitivos, emocionais e comportamentais tornando-se gradualmente mais consciente destes. Algum sofrimento e desconforto são experienciados no processo dado que emoções negativas e cognições disfuncionais são encaradas sem distrações ou escapes. Algum sofrimento e desconforto são experienciados no processo dado que emoções negativas e cognições disfuncionais são encaradas sem distrações ou escapes. O seu nível de auto-consciência aumenta e experiência também profundos *insights* acerca dos seus processos mentais. Treina em identificar e discriminar entre cognições funcionais e disfuncionais para alterar as emoções experienciadas como sua consequência e alterar também comportamentos subsequentes, todos estes de disfuncionais para funcionais e mais positivos. Treina também em alterar crenças e significados atribuídos a estímulos externos e internos. A meditação é a principal ferramenta para integrar novos significados que deseja atribuir à sua experiência de ser e estar no mundo com a sua experiência pessoal prévia. Fazer parte de um grupo é reconhecido como significativo para a qualidade da experiência. P2 experiência momentos de percepção de perda de controlo dos seus processos mentais com desconforto e ansiedade. A confiança no mestre de retiro funciona como uma rede de segurança nestes episódios e ele lida com as emoções negativas alterando as suas cognições através da meditação, construindo confiança em si próprio e nas suas competências. P2 identifica indicadores de progresso no seu treino espiritual tais como elevados níveis de concentração e auto-consciência e menor intensidade de cognições disfuncionais e emoções negativas associadas.

Análise Pós-Estrutural

Encontradas as estruturas empreenderemos uma análise do que nos revelam acerca dos processos psicológicos da experiência tal como foi vivida e descrita pelos participantes. Numa primeira fase analisaremos os Constituintes Chave da experiência que são comuns a todas as estruturas isoladamente. Numa segunda fase analisaremos as variações entre as estruturas como um todo e neste contexto analisaremos os Constituintes Chave da experiência específicos a cada uma das estruturas.

Análise dos Constituintes Chave Comuns às três estruturas

Através das estruturas encontradas identificaram-se os constituintes chave, aqueles que são comuns às várias estruturas e que por isso assumem especial relevância naquela que é a essência da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Estes constituintes embora comuns às várias estruturas podem não ter os mesmos significados para os vários participantes mas ser ainda assim aspectos chave, componentes essenciais na estrutura do fenómeno.

Mestre de Retiro: Função e Presença

Em relação à função do mestre de retiro ela é descrita como sendo a orientar e guiar os participantes do retiro no seu treino espiritual. Fá-lo em dois contextos distintos: dentro e fora das sessões. Durante as sessões dá ensinamentos, guia meditações e facilita o debate de grupo entre os participantes. Fora das sessões ele dá resposta a pedidos individuais de orientação e necessidades específicas nas quais a sua experiência é reconhecida pelos participantes como uma mais-valia. O mestre de retiro actua como intermediário entre os modelos budistas e os

participantes; o mestre de retiro actua ainda como representante do guia espiritual dos participantes (o detentor da linhagem).

Em relação à presença do mestre de retiro, ela é descrita pela maioria dos participantes (5 em 6) como uma “presença amorosa”. Esta é entendida como tendo uma qualidade de amor, que é sentida pelos participantes como o desejo por parte do mestre de retiro de que estes sejam felizes. Mas mais além, é descrita também por alguns participantes a percepção que o mestre deseja que eles alcancem um estado interno de felicidade através de desenvolverem as suas próprias competências.

Relativamente à relação que se estabelece entre os participantes e o mestre de retiro esta é caracterizada por uma percepção por parte dos participantes de que o mestre nutre por eles um sentimento de amor, deseja que eles desenvolvam as suas competências e detém conhecimentos e competência para os orientar e guiar no processo de mudarem a qualidade da sua experiência. Por parte dos participantes eles desenvolvem um sentimento de confiança no mestre (que pode ser espontâneo em parte mas é também potenciado propositadamente pelos próprios) através do qual se dispõem a seguir as suas instruções e directrizes, desenvolvendo as suas próprias competências. Esta confiança serve como base para que os participantes: explorem aspectos dos seus processos mentais até então desconhecidos, os interpretem de acordo com as directrizes dadas pelo mestre, treinem em alterar as crenças e cognições identificadas como disfuncionais por alternativas dadas pelo mestre de retiro e que provêm dos modelos budistas. Ao empreender este processo os participantes sentem-se seguros pois vêm na figura do mestre uma âncora de segurança que os mantêm “seguros” apesar das dificuldades que possam experimentar e que possam ser percebidas como estando acima da sua capacidade. Nestes casos, podem recorrer ao mestre dizendo um dos participantes que geralmente ele os incentiva a lidarem com as suas dificuldades ao invés de lhes dar ele próprio as soluções, favorecendo assim a sua autonomização.

Podemos também considerar que as qualidades da relação mencionadas se assemelham às que encontramos numa relação de vinculação segura entre mãe e criança. Um dos participantes no decorrer da entrevista faz esta associação, entre a

figura do mestre de retiro e a da sua própria mãe. Podemos ainda considerar que há semelhanças entre as qualidades desta relação e os processos que ocorrem a ela associados e a relação psicoterapêutica. No entanto, embora se reconheçam semelhanças ao nível das qualidades da relação estabelecida entre o mestre de retiro e os participantes e uma relação de vinculação segura ou uma relação terapêutica reconhecem-se também as diferenças. As semelhanças têm a ver com aspectos da qualidade relacional e com processos psicológicos que ocorrem no contexto da relação. As diferenças residem nos métodos utilizados, no próprio *setting*, nos modelos utilizados, nas crenças associadas. Semelhanças e diferenças à parte podemos certamente considerar que as características mencionadas acerca do mestre de retiro apontam no sentido de alguém com um bom nível de inteligência emocional e boa capacidade de liderança.

Monitorização dos padrões individuais de Cognição, Emoção e Comportamento

Todos os participantes descreveram como parte integral da sua experiência o estarem constantemente a monitorizar os seus processos mentais, nomeadamente a tomarem consciência dos seus padrões mentais e emoções e comportamentos a eles associados. Este processo é descrito como ocorrendo tanto em relação a aspectos negativos como positivos mas com mais ênfase dada em geral aos aspectos negativos da experiência. Isto terá a ver com o objectivo dos participantes de mudarem a qualidade da sua experiência e por esta razão prestam mais atenção às emoções negativas e questionam-se acerca das cognições que lhes dão origem.

Esta monitorização é descrita como ocorrendo ao longo de toda a experiência, durante as sessões de meditação mas também nos intervalos. Ela tem como base os modelos da psicologia budista, ou seja, os participantes observam os seus processos mentais recorrendo a este quadro de referência de explicação e entendimento dos processos mentais.

Identificação de Cognições e Emoções Funcionais e Disfuncionais

Com base nos modelos da psicologia budista os participantes orientam a monitorização que fazem dos seus processos mentais, seguindo pistas atencionais de acordo com objectivos específicos. Assim, a monitorização que se faz segue um critério: o do que é considerado pelo sujeito como funcional e desejável ou disfuncional e indesejável, de acordo com os modelos budistas. Este processo implica três passos que estão implícitos nalguns protocolos mas que são também verbalizados directamente por alguns participantes: identificar, reduzir e eliminar as cognições disfuncionais. O entendimento comum dos participantes é de que ao fazê-lo as qualidades negativas da sua experiência de ser e estar no mundo se tornarão mais fracas até eventualmente desaparecerem por completo. As cognições disfuncionais são referidas como “delusões”, do latim *delusione* significando engano; ilusão (Dic.Porto Editora). A própria linguagem utilizada remete para o significado em geral atribuído no budismo a estas cognições disfuncionais: elas enganam e iludem quem nelas se envolve pois aparentam conduzir a estados de felicidade e conduzem a estados de sofrimento. As cognições disfuncionais mais referidas pelos participantes são o “auto-aferro” o “apego” e a “raiva” (ver anexo para definições). Estas são no modelo budista as cognições disfuncionais de raiz a partir das quais todas as outras se desenvolvem. Isto reforça a ideia de que a monitorização que os participantes fazem dos seus processos mentais segue os modelos budistas aprendidos no contexto da sua prática espiritual e se faz de acordo com pistas atencionais específicas.

Treino de Novas Crenças, Cognições e Emoções

O método budista para lidar com cognições e emoções consideradas disfuncionais descrito em três passos como referido anteriormente é: identificar, reduzir, eliminar. Através dos protocolos consideramos que os participantes empreendem a redução de cognições disfuncionais através da substituição das mesmas por outras identificadas como funcionais. Em relação às emoções estas são também treinadas na sequência do treino cognitivo, após se treinar numa nova cognição exploram-se as consequências emocionais da mesma – uma forma

alternativa de se emocionar. Estas cognições e emoções alternativas às originais do participante enraízam-se nos modelos Budistas de compreensão dos fenómenos.

Ao treinar desta forma consideramos que também as crenças do sujeito se alterem, embora isto requeira um treino continuado que a maioria dos participantes admita embora não o possamos confirmar.

Nos protocolos são mencionadas muitas estratégias diferentes específicas que usam por base este modelo de alteração da cognição de acordo com a crença budista, o que leva o participante a emocionar-se de uma forma diferente. Ao nível do comportamento são referidas mudanças mas estas não são imperativas. Por vezes é descrito que o comportamento exterior não se alterou mas que ao mudar a forma de perceber e sentir então a qualidade da experiência foi alterada e é sentida como mais funcional e positiva.

Uma análise detalhada das várias estratégias mencionadas seria interessante mas não será levada a cabo neste presente trabalho para não se perder o foco do mesmo.

Meditação como Ferramenta

A principal ferramenta em retiro é a Meditação. Os participantes referem que durante a fase de contemplação da meditação integram os novos significados a serem atribuídos com a sua própria experiência pessoal. Isto torna a meditação um treino muito pessoal e específico às circunstâncias de cada um e que cumprirá objectivos pessoais de cada participante. A meditação funciona então como um momento do treino no qual o participante após ter tomado contacto com diferentes crenças, cognições e emoções as tomará para si e as integrará na sua experiência pessoal apropriando-se dos significados veiculados e criando uma experiência sua.

Auto-Consciência e Insight

Todos os participantes descrevem que experiencial níveis elevados de auto-consciência dos seus processos mentais. Descrevem também aceder a informação acerca de si próprios que não lhes era acessível previamente à experiência do

retiro e de um modo intuitivo e directo. Estes níveis elevados são relativos, ou seja, os participantes experimentam níveis superiores de auto-consciência e maior *insight* quando comparado com a sua experiência do dia-a-dia. Estes estão relacionados na própria narrativa dos participantes com factores de predisposição interna – estarem muito motivados para se monitorizarem e fazerem-no de forma contínua – e também com factores externos – a ausência de actividades distractivas, o observar silêncio a todo o momento.

Desconforto e Sofrimento

No decorrer do processo de estar em retiro são descritos momentos em que os participantes experimentam sensações desagradáveis: sofrimento, dor mental, desconforto. Estas experiências estão directamente relacionadas nas narrativas com constituintes já antes mencionados: a constante monitorização e identificação dos próprios processos mentais que conduz a um elevado nível de consciência destes. Este desconforto e sofrimento provêm no entender dos participantes da tomada de consciência de aspectos menos agradáveis de si próprios, da activação (propositada ou não) de memórias de experiências que foram vividas com afectos negativos, de dificuldades no processo de treino de adoptar novas cognições e crenças acerca do mundo, do vivenciar situações debaixo da influencia de cognições disfuncionais. Este sofrimento é visto pelos participantes como transitório ao contrário do sofrimento que provem de manter cognições e crenças consideradas disfuncionais. Os participantes crêem que se não mudarem as suas crenças e cognições acerca do mundo (incluindo-se a eles próprios nesse mundo) então o sofrimento não terminará por si só dado que na visão budista sofrimento e felicidade dependem da mente, da cognição que se faz numa dada situação. Já a representação que têm deste sofrimento experimentado no processo de retiro é distinta. Ele é entendido como algo que terá um fim e que faz parte do processo de transformação do *self*, sendo um mal menor comparado com a mais valia dos resultados a serem atingidos. O estar disponível para suportar este sofrimento é algo que demonstra o elevado nível de motivação e empenho dos participantes para mudar a qualidade da sua experiência. É referido por alguns participantes que

o não querer suportar este nível de desconforto pode levar as pessoas a não entrarem em contacto com os seus aspectos disfuncionais ou uma vez que o tenham feito a recalcarem as suas experiências para evitar o desconforto associado. O que leva estes participantes a suportar este nível de desconforto com elevada motivação é a crença base budista de que ao mudarem as suas cognições disfuncionais poderão alcançar uma experiência interna de paz mental e felicidade independente das circunstâncias exteriores. Estes participantes demonstram ter um *locus* de controlo predominantemente interno.

Ausência de Distracções ou Escapes

A ausência de escapes ou distrações assume duas vertentes: externa e interna.

A nível externo é referida a ausência de actividades distractivas quando em comparação com a vida diária fora de retiro. No centro de retiros os participantes envolvem-se em quatro sessões de Meditação por dia. Nos intervalos entre sessões fazem 3 refeições em conjunto e realizam tarefas relacionadas com a manutenção dos espaços comuns tais como limpar e arrumar. No restante tempo que tenham disponível referem dar passeios dado que o centro se encontra envolvido por floresta e prados, podem também estudar ou ler acerca de temas budistas. Não são permitidas actividades distractivas como ver televisão, ouvir música, falar com outros participantes ou comunidade residente, falar ao telemóvel, usar a Internet, jogar jogos, etc. (ANEXO A). Estas regras e condições externas reduzem os estímulos externos que poderiam ser usados como distração ou escape para evitar envolver-se no treino proposto. Elas satisfazem os dois primeiros níveis de retiro de acordo com o modelo budista: retiro físico e retiro verbal.

A nível interno o seguir ou não distrações mentais depende inteiramente de cada participante pois as condições externas por si só não são determinantes da experiência individual de cada um. A motivação, empenho e capacidade de cada participante para durante o retiro se dedicar ao treino proposto e se envolver apenas no estudo, contemplação e meditação proporcionados satisfaz o terceiro nível de retiro de acordo com o modelo budista: retiro mental.

As condições externas são experimentadas em geral como desafiantes e agradáveis. Desafiantes pois o participante sujeita-se a condições diferentes do dia a dia, pois por um lado ele confronta-se com o estar sozinho consigo (ainda que em grupo já que está em silêncio) e as habituais estratégias de que ele dispõe para lidar com sentimentos desagradáveis não estão disponíveis. Estas são mencionadas como: recorrer a alguém para falar ou envolver-se numa actividade para se distrair do que o perturba. Estas condições externas são também consideradas como agradáveis pois permitem ao participante envolver-se num nível de introspecção mais profundo que no dia-a-dia. Além disto, são mencionadas vantagens como ter espaço e tempo para proceder à alteração das cognições disfuncionais sem estar em modo de “reagir” ao exterior, como no dia-a-dia.

A nível interno, a não envolvência dos participantes em distrações ou escapes é sentida como positiva e como uma das mais-valias da experiência de retiro. A motivação para o fazerem relaciona-se com a cognição da relação entre distrações e “delusões” – cognições disfuncionais. Os participantes têm uma representação dos seus próprios processos mentais como havendo mais familiaridade com padrões de pensamento/cognição disfuncionais. Neste sentido a atenção continua (monitorização) permite identificá-los para os reduzir ou mesmo eliminar (dependendo do nível de capacidade. As distrações são vistas como um obstáculo a este treino e por essa razão são evitadas quando em retiro para que o treino seja mais intenso e profundo que o do dia-a-dia.

Dinâmicas de grupo

Todos os participantes sentiram a qualidade da sua experiência ser afectada pelo facto de se envolverem em retiro no contexto de um grupo. Aqueles que têm experiência de retiro solitário apresentam características de contraste entre um e outro tipo de experiência. O fazer parte de um grupo é percebido como gerador de motivação mas também de desafios pessoais que surgem da convivência comum. É ainda referido que num retiro de grupo o nível de auto-conhecimento relativo a estilos de relacionamento interpessoais é incrementado.

Variações entre estruturas

Embora existam três possíveis estruturas da experiência encontradas neste estudo analisaremos primeiramente as variações entre a estrutura A e o conjunto das estruturas B-C. Isto porque há uma semelhança entre as estruturas B e C que reside na presença e ausência dos mesmos constituintes quando em comparação com a estrutura A. Seguidamente analisaremos as variações das estruturas B e C entre si.

Variações entre: Estrutura A e as Estruturas B-C

Verificam-se variações entre a estrutura A e as estruturas B-C. A principal variação consiste num constituinte extra presente nas estruturas B-C mas não na A. Este é bastante significativo do ponto de vista dos processos psicológicos – “Percepção de Perda de Controlo dos Processos Mentais”. Esta percepção de perda de controlo dos próprios processos mentais é vivenciada por dois participantes no decurso da sua experiência de retiro solitário e não em grupo. Esta caracteriza-se pela percepção da ausência temporária de competência para lidar com aspectos dos processos mentais mas não impossibilita os participantes de funcionar no mundo. No entanto é sentida como desagradável e ansiogénica. Ambos referem a noção de “loucura” para descrever a sua experiência. Também aqui o Mestre e as condições de retiro são mencionadas como uma rede de segurança que possibilita aos participantes permitirem-se vivenciar estas experiências no limiar da sua capacidade sem que a sensação de medo os impeça de explorar e ampliar os seus limites. Este constituinte articula-se com o treino que os participantes empreendiam de se monitorizarem e tentarem alterar as suas cognições afectando conseqüentemente a sua experiência emocional e comportamental. Neste contexto não parece invulgar nem disfuncional uma

experiência de perda de controlo por duas razões que se relacionam com outros constituintes da experiência. Por um lado há uma maior consciência dos processos psicológicos cognitivos e emocionais dado que a atenção dos participantes está neles focada voluntariamente. Por outro lado estes procedem também a uma alteração dos significados atribuídos à sua própria experiência através de substituição de cognições reconhecidas como disfuncionais e treino em estimular formas de se emocionar alternativas às habituais. Ambas as razões apontam no sentido de uma exploração de áreas que desafiam os modos habituais de funcionamento e que pode por isso ser sentida como ameaçadora.

Podemos questionar se apenas para estes participantes este constituinte fez parte da experiência ou se também os outros participantes experienciaram momentos de perda de controlo percebida mas não o verbalizaram. Uma razão possível para tal seria o não estar suficientemente à vontade com o investigador para se expor e revelar algo tão íntimo. Mas não podemos sabê-lo através dos dados, ficamos apenas ao nível da colocação de hipóteses.

Os participantes que relatam esta “percepção da perda de controlo” são ambos do sexo masculino por oposição aos que não a relatam e que são todos do sexo feminino. Não faremos generalizações extrapoláveis relativamente a diferenças de género. Podemos no entanto levantar a hipótese se para os participantes do sexo masculino a questão do controle é mais central para a sua experiência que para os do sexo feminino. Neste sentido os participantes do sexo feminino podem ter experimentado também momentos de perda de controlo percebida mas não lhes ter atribuído a mesma importância não os tendo mencionado na entrevista. Mais uma vez não podemos sabê-lo através dos dados, ficamos apenas ao nível da colocação de hipóteses. O que sabemos é que para alguns participantes a percepção de perda de controlo temporária dos próprios processos mentais faz parte da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista.

Variações entre B e C

Estas duas estruturas apresentam os mesmos constituintes. No entanto há variações no modo como estes constituintes se articulam entre si e no significado atribuído aos constituintes pelos participantes na construção da sua experiência. O constituinte relativo à função e presença do mestre de retiro está presente em ambos mas adquire diferentes significados e protagonismo. Na estrutura B toda a experiência se constrói em torno deste constituinte, a narrativa está nele centrada e é com este referencial que ela se desenvolve. A figura do mestre de retiro inspira e motiva o participante a envolver-se na actividade de retiro. Durante esta actividade ela é o principal fio condutor da experiência. Esta figura é transportada para a experiência pós-retiro tal é a sua significância para o participante. Podemos considerar que nesta estrutura é mais predominante a presença do mestre de retiro que a sua função, embora ambas estejam interligadas na construção que o participante faz da experiência. A função do mestre de retiro (de guiar o participante no seu treino espiritual) é assegurada pela percepção da sua presença quer a nível físico, através de memórias do participante ou de uma representação mental que este tenha do mestre e que o acompanha mesmo para além da experiência do retiro. Já na estrutura A o constituinte relativo à presença e função do mestre de retiro, embora presente, assume um papel diferente. Toda a experiência se constrói em torno do próprio participante, a narrativa está centrada no participante e na sua *performance* durante o retiro. Podemos levantar a questão de que este participante estava em retiro desde há cinco anos na altura da entrevista. Ele residia no centro de retiros e envolvia-se maioritariamente em retiro solitário e só ocasionalmente em retiros de grupo. Neste contexto pode fazer sentido que a sua experiência se construa em torno da sua performance individual mas não podemos afirmar que isto se deva apenas à sua experiência de retiro solitário. Nesta estrutura podemos considerar que a presença do mestre de retiro se justifica pela sua função. O participante valoriza os ensinamentos do mestre de retiros e recorre a ele quando percebe que o seu nível de competência para lidar com a situação não é

suficiente. O mestre de retiro actua, nas próprias palavras do participante, como uma âncora de segurança. Este dá-lhe suporte de modo que possa explorar e experimentar por si próprio e estimula-o a aumentar a sua capacidade favorecendo a sua autonomização. Deste modo o participante progressivamente desenvolve competências e ganha confiança nas suas próprias capacidades. Deste modo a função do mestre é integrada e desempenhada cada vez mais pelo participante que aprende a guiar-se e orientar-se tornando-se mais autónomo no seu treino.

DISCUSSÃO

Relembramos o carácter exploratório deste estudo, a ausência de hipóteses e o problema: conhecer os significados da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Foi seguido o Método Fenomenológico aplicado à psicologia de Giorgi com o objectivo de clarificar a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista, ir além dos benefícios associados à meditação e descobrir os elementos constituintes da experiência e as relações entre eles. Para tal todo o estudo foi orientado pela pergunta: “Como é vivida pelos participantes a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista?”

Os dados obtidos foram três estruturas que exprimem a essência de “como é vivida pelos participantes a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista”, i.e., quais os processos psicológicos por detrás desta experiência tal como é vivida pelos participantes. Foram também identificados os constituintes chave da experiência.

Dado que este estudo se pretendia exploratório e de acordo com o método Fenomenológico aplicado à psicologia consideramos que os objectivos foram alcançados.

Relativamente a estudos anteriores e à literatura faremos agora uma breve discussão das semelhanças encontradas. Devemos no entanto ter em linha de conta duas diferenças fundamentais nos elementos que são comparados: 1) comparamos resultados de um estudo de natureza qualitativa – este – com estudos de natureza quantitativa; 2) comparamos resultados de um estudo acerca do fenómeno “retiro de meditação budista” com resultados de estudos acerca dos fenómenos da “meditação” como ferramenta ou apenas de alguns dos seus

componentes (aspectos mentais ou conteúdos específicos da meditação).

Retiro de Meditação Budista e Bem-Estar

Os resultados apontam no sentido de corroborar um efeito positivo do papel do “*Mindfulness*” contributivo para um bom nível de bem-estar, especificamente comportamento auto-regulado e estados emocionais positivos (Brown & Ryan, 2003). Estados emocionais positivos é um dos constituintes da estrutura da experiência e encontramos-lo explícito na estrutura da experiência. Consideramos no entanto que contributivo também para a experiência dos estados emocionais positivos e do comportamento auto-regulado é o treino em meditação da alteração das próprias cognições para vivenciar emoções mais positivas e alterar o comportamento. Nos dados há uma interligação do papel do *mindfulness* com o treino em conteúdos cognitivos específicos que para os participantes são promotores de bem-estar. Sugere-se para investigação futura estudos acerca dos efeitos positivos do *mindfulness* para o bem-estar tendo em consideração o papel mediador dos conteúdos aplicados na meditação.

Retiro de meditação Budista e Compaixão

Confirma-se o pressuposto de Kristeller & Johnson (2005) de que quando a meditação é enquadrada num contexto de abertura do coração e sintonização com as necessidades dos outros então sentimentos de compaixão poderão emergir fortemente e ser acompanhados de acções, estes são direccionados ao próprio e aos outros. Embora não se encontre nenhum constituinte específico relativo aos sentimentos de compaixão este inclui-se no constituinte de alteração de cognições e crenças. Tal como foi referido na análise de dados estas alterações das crenças e cognições têm como referencia o modelo budista no qual as qualidades de compaixão e amor são centrais. São então treinadas em meditação cognições

acerca do próprio e dos outros que conduzem ao desenvolvimento de compaixão. Nos protocolos de alguns participantes (P1 e P2) isto é a principal alteração de cognição mencionada. Nestes participantes estes sentimentos são mencionados como surgindo de um treino em alterar as suas cognições para lidar com sentimentos de raiva dirigidos a outros. Estes sentimentos de raiva deram lugar a sentimentos de compaixão e amor por meio do treino em meditação através de alterar a cognição associada à situação.

A importância que Linehan (2007) atribui ao desenvolvimento da capacidade de sentir auto-compaixão e para a qual à meditação na respiração na Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) verifica-se também neste contexto de retiro de meditação budista. Em particular é reportado por alguns participantes o desejo de se libertarem eles próprios de sofrimento. No entanto no presente estudo consideraremos que este desejo está fortemente relacionado com a alteração das cognições que são treinadas em meditação no decorrer do retiro e do próprio percurso budista. Um dos temas centrais ao retiro é a “Renúncia”, o desenvolver um desejo de se libertar do sofrimento não só no presente mas em todas as vidas futuras. Se atentarmos também ao facto de que a atenção dos participantes se foca em monitorizarem os seus processos mentais e emocionais então compreenderemos que tomam contacto com as suas próprias experiências de sofrimento. Estas são usadas no desenvolvimento deste desejo de não sofrer, auto-compaixão, como factor preponderante que motiva o início e persistência no treino espiritual.

Os benefícios da meditação referidos por Gilbert e Procter (2006) como técnica para lidar com problemáticas como a ansiedade, auto-criticismo, vergonha; e aumentar a capacidade dos participantes de se auto-acalmarem de se focarem em sentimentos calorosos e de tranquilização para o *self* encontram neste estudo confirmação. Para alguns participantes a sua relação consigo próprio foi alterada através se envolver em retiro de meditação budista (P1, P6) passando a ter mais capacidade de auto-aceitação e menos autocrítica. Um dos participantes relata actuar estratégias de se auto-acalmarem para lidar com sentimentos desagradáveis após sair de retiro, tendo sido estas influenciadas pela actuação do mestre de retiro (P1). Para outros participantes a meditação pode actuar como forma de lidar com

sentimentos de vergonha (P4) e auto-criticismo (P6). Sempre que referimos que a meditação pode actuar como estratégia para lidar com este tipo de problemática remetemo-nos para dois factores que parecem chave: o conteúdo da meditação – o objecto, a relação com o mestre de retiro – que cumpre as funções do guia espiritual. As meditações empreendidas pelos participantes deste retiro têm objectos específicos em função dos objectivos que se tenha à partida. Neste sentido existem meditações mais orientadas para desenvolver sentimentos de aceitação, auto-compaixão, etc. os participantes referem o recurso a objectos específicos de acordo com necessidades específicas de cada momento. Na relação com o mestre de retiro, que representa o papel do guia espiritual, são aprendidas competências por modelagem mas também por estar numa relação com. Um exemplo concreto deste último ponto é uma participante que refere ter aprendido a ser mais paciente consigo mesma, a ter mais capacidade de auto-aceitação por reconhecer essa qualidade na forma como o mestre se relaciona com ela.

Retiro de Meditação Budista e Psicologia Positiva / Bem-Estar

Em relação a pontos-chave do conceito de bem-estar (Ryff, 1989) podemos considerar que o treino empreendido em retiro de meditação Budista actua na capacidade de: auto aceitação, relações positivas com os outros, autonomia, sentido de propósito na vida, e crescimento pessoal. Não fizemos uso das referidas escalas mas estes aspectos psicológicos estão presentes na análise qualitativa que fizemos dos dados e embora não figurem explicitamente nas estruturas fazem parte dos conteúdos do constituinte “alteração de crenças e crenças”.

Relativamente aos aspectos do budismo apontados por Wallace e Shapiro (2006) como sendo suportados pela investigação psicológica mais recente encontramos-os na análise dos dados. Queremos com isto dizer que para os participantes estes aspectos fazem parte da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista. Exemplos disto são: o pressuposto Budista de que a felicidade obtida através de estados mentais positivos cultivados através de treino específico, como a meditação, é mais duradoura que aquela obtida através dos prazeres

sensoriais; o pressuposto de que as fontes de felicidade que conduziriam ao bem-estar desejado são frequentemente mal identificadas pelas pessoas; tentar alcançar um estado interno de bem-estar exclusivamente através de condições externas perfeitas, resulta em níveis mais baixos de satisfação, e que em comparação um estado de bem-estar é alcançado por aqueles que se satisfazem quando as condições externas atingem um determinado nível considerado aceitável em função dos seus valores internos.

Ter aspirações e objectivos claros e bem definidos que não entram em conflito entre si e fazer progresso para os alcançar foi identificado por Emmons (1986 cit por Wallace & Shapiro, 2006) como indicadores de bem-estar subjectivo e felicidade. Para os participantes de facto o significado que atribuem ao envolverem-se na actividade de retiro parece estar fortemente relacionado na sua narrativa com o seu nível de felicidade e satisfação. Os participantes referem ter objectivos mais gerais como: alcançar felicidade e estar livre de sofrimento, mas também definem objectivos específicos para cada etapa do seu treino espiritual. Estes objectivos específicos prendem-se com as suas necessidades específicas a cada momento e os obstáculos percebidos como obstrutores dos objectivos gerais. Exemplos disto são: focar-se no processo e não em resultados, aprender a aceitar o sofrimento, melhorar as relações com os outros, aprender estratégias para lidar com sentimentos negativos como a raiva, etc.

Retiro de Meditação Budista e Bem-Estar Espiritual

A maioria dos participantes revela no seu discurso ter confiança relativamente ao sucesso do seu treino espiritual e ao modelo/sistema de crença que seguem como sendo eficaz. Talvez assim se justifique o elevado nível de compromisso durante a actividade de retiro que lhes permite experimentar e aceder a aspectos que identificam como menos positivos acerca de si próprios com o objectivo de proceder à alteração dos mesmos.

No discurso alguns participantes demonstram ter-se apropriado das crenças budistas como suas e revelam o desejo de se apropriarem progressivamente mais

de modo a que não haja diferenças entre as suas crenças pessoais e as do modelo seguido.

Esse sistema de crença pode proporcionar-lhes um significado e propósito para a sua existência, o que é afirmado de forma explícita por alguns participantes. Parte integral desse sistema de crenças são os métodos predominantemente internos para realização pessoal do praticante e que aparecem em todos os protocolos.

A ética de acordo com a visão do sistema de crença budista pode ter um papel mediador da ligação do participante consigo próprio, com os outros e com uma realidade mais alargada.

A actividade de retiro de meditação Budista é referida por alguns participantes como um bom complemento para a sua pratica espiritual na sua vida diária. Ao permiti-lhes um treino mais intenso que não teriam oportunidade de empreender noutras condições potencia também a sua performance quando fora de retiro, ou esta é pelo menos a percepção de alguns participantes.

No entanto, todos estes aspectos necessitam clarificação pois os dados não nos permitem fazer inferências acerca dos mesmos, ou seja, as contribuições da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista para o bem-estar espiritual dos participantes deverão ser alvo de investigação futura.

Retiro de Meditação Budista e Coping

Os benefícios da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação Budista estão também associados a estratégias de *coping* que diminuem ou neutralizam o impacto negativo de factores de *stress* que prejudicam a saúde mental. De facto os participantes empreendem esforços para compreender e lidar com situações críticas da vida e também pelas contrariedades do dia-a-dia. A forma como os participantes o fazem é recorrendo aos sistemas de crenças budistas e à aplicação dos métodos para adoptar estas crenças. Neste processo questionam a sua interpretação das situações críticas, factores de *stress*, contrariedades; analisam as suas expectativas e cognições; procedem então ao treino em adoptar novas cognições que conduzem a emoções mais positivas. Mais uma vez realçamos o

papel que os conteúdos, ou objectos, da meditação têm neste processo. Não é a técnica de meditação por si só que consiste na estratégia de *coping* mas os conteúdos específicos da própria meditação. Em particular mencionamos os objectos de meditação específicos para transformar adversidades no caminho espiritual (objectos de meditação de Lojong) previamente referidos na revisão de literatura e que constam dos protocolos dos participantes (explícito em P5 mas implícito em P1, P2 e P6). Investigação futura sobre estes aspectos específicos é necessária para clarificar o contributo da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação Budista na aprendizagem de estratégias de *coping* ou de que modo pode a própria experiência servir como parte de uma estratégia de *coping*.

Retiro de Meditação Budista no Contexto da Religião/Espiritualidade

Neste estudo abordámos a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação sendo esta praticada no contexto de uma prática religiosa/espiritual. Os próprios participantes deste estudo quando questionados definem-se como Budistas. No contexto budista da NKT os praticantes comumente referem-se a eles próprios como praticantes espirituais, significando isto alguém que põe os ensinamentos budistas em prática na sua vida diária.

Podemos agora discutir acerca do facto desta experiência de retiro de meditação ser no contexto de uma prática religiosa/espiritual específica: o Budismo. Como já foi referido os estudos mencionados anteriormente na revisão de literatura reportam-se às técnicas de meditação como ferramentas importadas pela psicologia para uso com fins terapêuticos ou na vida diária dos sujeitos sem referir se esta é efectuada no contexto de uma prática espiritual/religiosa específica. Neste estudo o interesse foi o de explorar a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação Budista e quais os processos psicológicos que lhe estão associados. Até aqui empreendemos a tarefa de discutir semelhanças dos resultados qualitativos deste estudo sobre retiro de meditação Budista com os resultados quantitativos de estudos anteriores sobre a meditação. Em cada semelhança encontrada foi realçado o papel dos conteúdos das meditações realizadas no contexto de retiro. Consideramos que

estes conteúdos são da maior importância para a compreensão da experiência destes participantes. Nas estruturas da experiência é referido que os participantes treinam em alterar as suas crenças e cognições de acordo com o modelo de referência Budista. Fazem-no através do recurso à meditação como ferramenta ou técnica. Através da meditação familiarizam-se com novos significados a atribuir à sua experiência. Desta forma alteram as suas cognições, as emoções que lhes estão associadas e eventualmente o seu comportamento. Neste ponto consideramos encontrar uma diferença fundamental relativamente aos estudos que apenas consideram a meditação como ferramenta ou alguns dos seus componentes como o *mindfulness* (talvez como excepção possamos considerar os estudos acerca da meditação na compaixão). Esta diferença reside no facto do presente estudo ter em linha de conta a meditação no contexto de uma prática espiritual/religiosa e por este motivo permitir a emergência dos conteúdos da meditação. Por conteúdos da meditação entendemos as linhas de raciocínio usadas na fase contemplativa da meditação. Estes conteúdos são então a base para as alterações às cognições dos participantes, os novos significados que atribuem à sua experiência. Estes conteúdos estão intimamente ligados com a visão budista do mundo, inclusivamente com os modelos da psicologia Budista usados para fazer sentido do pensamento, emoção e comportamento humanos.

Neste sentido consideramos que a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação e a própria experiência de meditação podem ser qualitativamente diferentes se estas ocorrerem no contexto de uma prática espiritual/religiosa Budista, de outra prática espiritual ou de outra qualquer modalidade de meditação. Apontamos para que as diferenças que ocorram possam ter como base os conteúdos da meditação, nas linhas de raciocínio da fase contemplativa. Mais investigação deverá ser feita no sentido de clarificar de que modo isto ocorre e quais as diferenças específicas.

Problemas Metodológicos e Limites das Conclusões

As conclusões do estudo são a base para uma discussão acerca deste fenómeno mas não são generalizáveis para a toda a população budista nem para a população em geral. Elas são específicas de uma população budista em particular – a NKT – e de um tipo particular de retiro – Lamrim.

Os limites das conclusões têm a ver com três aspectos possíveis: engano por parte dos participantes, erros por parte do investigador, limitações do método.

Em relação aos participantes, podemos considerar os erros provenientes da sua memória e/ou percepção da experiência. Não consideraremos que estes interfiram com o objectivo do estudo já que este é conhecer as experiências tal como foram vividas pelos participantes. Outra possibilidade seria a de enganar o investigador e dar-lhe a conhecer aspectos selectivos da experiência ou mesmo descrevê-la como se acha ou deseja que ela tivesse ocorrido. Consideramos esta como uma possibilidade de erro embora os dados não aparentem seguir esta tendência. A razão para tal é que os participantes relatam aspectos positivos e negativos, expondo-se ao ponto de descrever as suas incapacidades, limitações e situações de perda de controlo.

Em relação aos erros que possam ser cometidos por parte do investigador estes prendem-se com a questão da centralidade da sua subjectividade neste método. Consideramos que todos os esforços foram feitos para minimizar os efeitos de qualquer limitação desta natureza. Embora houvesse um conhecimento prévio do tema em estudo (Budismo, Meditação e Retiro) as experiências tal como foram vividas pelo investigador e as suas crenças foram deixadas de parte no processo de entrevista e análise dos dados ao assumir a postura de “*bracketing*” (dos seus referenciais) e da atitude psicológica (assumindo como foco de interesse os processos psicológicos por detrás do fenómeno descrito). Ainda assim, o que foi mantido foi um conhecimento geral do meio que permite ao investigador aceder mais facilmente aos significados gerais dos termos e conceitos usados pelos

participantes (ainda que lhes fosse perguntado sempre que possível como eram estes experienciados por si ou quais os significados pessoais que lhes atribuíam).

Em relação ao método o próprio autor (Giorgi, 2003b) aponta as limitações acima referidas relativamente aos participantes e ao papel da subjectividade. No que diz respeito às questões de fundo Giorgi (2002; 2004) aponta que tal como em qualquer outro método estas prendem-se com a fidelidade e validade dos resultados proveniente da forma como se acede aos dados e se procede à sua análise. Não havendo nenhuma forma ideal de se fazer investigação por todos os métodos terem mais-valias e limitações consideramos neste caso preferível dar prioridade à riqueza psicológica do fenómeno em estudo em prol de um qualquer nível de objectividade proveniente de um acordo intersubjectivo. Assumindo este risco da subjectividade do método consideramos que a riqueza dos dados compensa esta limitação.

Consideraremos ainda o que poderia ser feito para melhorar este estudo.

Para a experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista foram encontradas três estruturas para uma amostra de seis participantes. Poderíamos pensar em aumentar a amostra para ver se estas estruturas se mantiveram ou novas apareceriam. Quanto maior for a amostra mais a estrutura da essência será generalizável.

As condições nas quais as entrevistas foram conduzidas não foram as ideais dada a falta de um local apropriado, em futuras investigações sempre que possível este aspecto deverá ser melhorado.

Futura investigação

A partir deste estudo exploratório novas problemáticas podem ser levantadas para investigação futura. Estas problemáticas podem ainda ser abordadas segundo métodos qualitativos ou quantitativos. Enumeramos de seguida algumas áreas de interesse que surgiram no decorrer do presente estudo de acordo com os dados obtidos:

Retiro de Meditação Budista – Métodos Quantitativos

Dado ter sido levado a cabo um estudo exploratório e de natureza qualitativa sugerimos a realização de estudos quantitativos acerca de alguns aspectos da experiência de retiro de meditação Budista. Estas clarificarão a sua correlação com indicadores de saúde mental, bem-estar geral, bem-estar espiritual, lazer, níveis de concentração, etc.

Meditação em Retiro Vs. Meditação na Vida Diária

Em todos os protocolos encontramos de forma explícita referências comparativas da experiência da prática de meditação em retiro com a prática de meditação na vida diária. A partir desta questão levantamos duas problemáticas: clarificar as diferenças da prática de meditação em retiro e na vida diária; e conhecer o contributo da experiência de estar em retiro a longo prazo na vida dos praticantes. Para ambas as problemáticas se poderiam seguir abordagens metodológicas qualitativas e/ou quantitativas dado que conhecemos já algumas questões levantadas pelos participantes no decorrer do presente estudo. Para conhecer o contributo da experiência de estar em retiro a longo prazo na vida dos praticantes sugerimos um estudo longitudinal.

Experiência de Meditação na Vida Diária

Como foi já referido aparecem nos protocolos de forma explícita referências comparativas da experiência da prática de meditação em retiro com a prática de meditação na vida diária. Mas há também praticantes de meditação Budista que não se envolvem na prática de retiro tendo no entanto uma prática diária continuada de meditação budista. Estudos que clarifiquem os processos psicológicos associados a esta prática de meditação na vida diária são sugeridos. Estes estudos podem seguir uma abordagem qualitativa para aceder aos significados da envolvência na prática de meditação por parte dos participantes. Podem também seguir abordagens quantitativas para clarificar a função da envolvência nesta prática e a sua correlação com indicadores de saúde mental, bem-estar geral, bem-estar espiritual, lazer, etc.

Coping e Resiliência

Os participantes deste estudo recorrem à meditação budista como estratégia de *coping*. É necessária mais investigação que ajude a clarificar quais as estratégias de *coping* específicas usadas pelos sujeitos que se envolvem na prática de meditação Budista (em retiro ou na vida diária); e qual o contributo da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista na aprendizagem de estratégias de *coping* ou de que modo pode a própria experiência servir como parte de uma estratégia de *coping*. Estes estudos podem seguir uma abordagem qualitativa mas poderia também ser investigada a resiliência destas populações de praticantes de meditação budista numa lógica quantitativa e tendo ainda em conta o possível papel mediador dos conteúdos da meditação (como por exemplo objectos de meditação do Lojong – transformar adversidades).

Relação Mestre Discípulo

Sendo a presença e função do Mestre de Retiro um constituinte chave da experiência de estar em retiro de meditação budista levantamos a problemática da relação entre mestre e discípulo. Mais investigação poderia clarificar quais as características da relação mestre discípulo no contexto do budismo moderno; qual o seu contributo para a qualidade, para a envolvimento e para a permanência na prática de meditação dos participantes. Abordagens qualitativas e quantitativas seriam justificáveis.

Mindfulness e Papel Mediador dos Conteúdos da Meditação:

Sugere-se para investigação futura estudos acerca dos efeitos positivos do *mindfulness* para o bem-estar tendo em consideração o papel mediador dos conteúdos aplicados na meditação.

Retiro de Meditação e Bem-Estar Espiritual

O contributo da experiência de estar em retiro de Meditação Budista para o Bem-estar espiritual deverá ser clarificado em investigação futura. Escalas de bem-estar espiritual podem ser usadas para correlacionar este fenómeno com o bem-estar espiritual mas também o papel mediador dos conteúdos específicos da meditação Budista pode ser levado em conta.

Retiro de Meditação Budista e Lazer

A envolvimento na actividade de meditação (em retiro ou não) pode ter funções de lazer e os benefícios associados mas estes devem ser clarificados por investigação futura.

Crença no Karma

Nos protocolos é referida explicitamente por alguns dos participantes a crença no Karma que tal como referido na introdução se refere a uma lei de causalidade entre acções e seus efeitos. Esta crença baseia-se na visão budista da existência cíclica com vidas passadas e futuras. Estas noções de temporalidade implícitas na crença no Karma podem influir na forma dos praticantes Budistas percepcionarem e se emocionarem na sua vida. Também implícito nesta crença está uma noção de responsabilização pessoal pela qualidade da experiência de cada um na sua vivência diária; esta pode ou não influir na percepção de controlo que os praticantes têm sobre a sua capacidade para alterar a qualidade da sua experiência de ser e estar no mundo. Mais investigação seria necessária para clarificar todos estes aspectos.

Vacuidade e auto-conceito / auto-imagem

Num dos protocolos (P2) é referida a meditação na vacuidade do “eu”, noutros é referida a meditação na vacuidade em geral sem especificação. Esta meditação na vacuidade dos fenómenos, incluindo o eu e o corpo, tem como base a contemplação no facto de os fenómenos não existirem da forma como são percepcionados normalmente, i.e., como existindo inerentemente em si mesmos, sem depender de causas e condições ou da mente que os percepciona. O Participante P2 refere que esta meditação reduz a ansiedade por si experimentada. Investigação futura poderia clarificar os efeitos desta meditação ao nível dos processos psicológicos; aspectos como o auto-conceito e auto-imagem poderiam ser explorados.

Percepção de Controlo, Auto-eficácia, Locus de Controlo

Nos protocolos os participantes demonstram através do seu discurso ter a percepção de que está ao seu alcance alterar as suas cognições e emoções através do treino em meditação de forma a melhorar a sua qualidade de vida. Investigação futura deverá clarificar a veracidade desta afirmação; medidas de percepção de controlo, auto-eficácia e *locus* de controlo poderão ser aplicadas. Mais uma vez o papel mediador dos conteúdos da meditação deve ter sido em atenção.

Conclusão

Este é um estudo que contribui para a clarificação dos fenómenos relacionados com a Meditação e aborda uma problemática original: o Fenómeno de Retiro de Meditação Budista. A originalidade do estudo prende-se com a questão de estudar a meditação no contexto de uma prática espiritual/religiosa – o Budismo - incidindo em particular sobre a experiência de retiro e seguindo o Método Fenomenológico Aplicado à Psicologia.

Neste estudo os resultados expressam a articulação das várias componentes da experiência tal como é vivida pelos praticantes. Em relação a estudos anteriores podemos considerar que é apresentada uma perspectiva diferente dado que a maioria dos estudos mencionados na revisão de literatura se focam em estudar aspectos isolados da experiência da meditação em detrimento de outros.

O recurso ao Método Fenomenológico permitiu aceder aos significados atribuídos à experiência pelos próprios participantes e os resultados, ao expressarem a essência dos processos psicológicos associados a esses significados vão além das limitações que podem surgir através da incompreensão dos conceitos Budistas.

A utilidade e aplicação dos conhecimentos deste estudo bem como das áreas sugeridas da investigação futura poderão passar por várias áreas mas três principais são sugeridas:

»Fornecer um maior conhecimento acerca das crenças e modelo Budista e dos processos psicológicos a elas associados.

»Compreender de que modo a envolvimento nesta actividade espiritual/religiosa pode contribuir para um óptimo nível de funcionamento dos sujeitos e para o seu bem-estar geral e espiritual.

»Ajudar a potencializar processos de acompanhamento psicológico e psicoterapêutico de sujeitos que se envolvam nestas actividades de retiro de meditação Budista: Quanto mais conhecimento os psicólogos e psicoterapeutas tiverem acerca dos processos psicológicos que decorrem nesta actividade mais poderão otimizar a sua conjugação com o processo de acompanhamento dos seus clientes e minimizar as barreiras que possam surgir por desconhecimento ou percepção de contradições entre processos.

Estas áreas sugeridas estão de acordo com a afirmação inicial de que não há neste estudo qualquer pretensão de adoptar técnicas budistas de meditação e usá-las fora do seu contexto. Consideramos que o uso que a psicologia enquanto disciplina científica pode fazer dos conhecimentos adquiridos acerca das técnicas de meditação pode ajudar a promover a saúde e bem-estar dos sujeitos que nelas se envolvem sem que seja necessário exportar o seu uso para contextos psicoterapêuticos ou outros como tem comumente sido feito. Pretendemos então gerar mais conhecimento acerca do uso destas técnicas que os próprios sujeitos fazem delas e potenciar os seus benefícios para a sua saúde e bem-estar através de uma melhor compreensão das mesmas pelo contexto no qual os sujeitos se inserem: a comunidade científica e de intervenção psicológica, e a sociedade em geral.

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ANEXO A

Tharpaland International Retreat Centre Retreaters Agreement (Short Group Retreats)

It is agreed as follows:-

- 1) The Retreater must observe and live within the Five Mahayana Precepts abstaining from:
 - Killing
 - Stealing
 - Lying
 - Any sexual misconduct and to observe celibacy on the grounds & property of T.I.R.C
 - Use of any intoxicants including tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs etc
- The Retreater must maintain absolute silence within the grounds at all times, and in other designated areas.
- The Retreater must not play musical instruments (including damarus and bells), except at the discretion of the Resident Teacher. CD/MP3 players may be used for dharma recordings only but earphones should be worn at all times.
- The Retreater must not produce any noise that may disturb fellow residents or retreaters, especially during session times.
- Retreaters are at no time permitted to use mobile phones or personal computers, except immediately prior to and at the conclusion of the retreat. These items must be left on deposit in the office for the duration of the retreat.
- The Retreater shall nurture and cherish the culture of retreat and at all times respect the functions and activities of T.I.R.C. The Retreater will respect the privacy and practise and/or retreat of fellow retreaters and residents, and not do anything that may cause disharmony in the community of T.I.R.C.
- When in silence, the Retreater shall not communicate directly with fellow retreaters or the Resident Teacher. All communication should be via the Managers.
- The Retreater shall protect the good relationships that T.I.R.C enjoys with the local farmers, the Forestry Commission and all neighbours respecting their rights, their property and their wishes and not acting in any way so as to bring T.I.R.C into disrepute.
- No food shall be taken from any T.I.R.C. designated area in the house or the food store without consulting a Manager.
- No candles or incense of any kind shall be burnt due to fire hazards.
- Should the Managers deem that the Retreater has failed to abide by the rules of this

agreement and/or the general rules of T.I.R.C, the Resident Teacher and/or Managers have the right to terminate this agreement immediately. In general, everyone coming to Tharpaland International Retreat Centre will be expected not to act in any way whatsoever that may cause unhappiness, disharmony or damage to the reputation of the Dharma, Tharpaland International Retreat Centre and it's residents, or the New Kadampa Tradition and it's teachers. To do so will incur instant dismissal.

Signed by the Retreater Date

Signed for Tharpaland Int Retreat Centre Date.....
Retreaters are advised to:

Refrain from keeping food in their room so as not to attract insects or animals. Any food must be kept in sealed containers.

Become familiar with fire exits and fire fighting equipment in all areas, especially near your own accommodation.

Take care of personal belongings, especially valuables. TIRC cannot accept responsibility for residents or visitors property. If necessary, valuables may be kept in a secure area in the TIRC office with prior negotiation with TIRC Managers.

Take care when walking in the forest, not to go too far or get lost and to always follow instructions on Forestry Commission signs.

ANEXO B

Carta entregue aos Participantes

ISPA Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada

Degree in Clinical Psychology
Frederico Pereira, Head of School

Rua Jardim do Tabaco, 34. 1149 - 041 Lisbon, Portugal
Tel 00 351 218 811 700 Fax 00 351 218 860 954
www.ispa.pt E-mail info@ispa.pt

Date: April 2007

Dear Retreater,

My name is Ana Teresa Branco and I am a clinical psychology student. I intend to conduct a qualitative study to explore the phenomenon of meditation retreat and would very much appreciate your participation. All it takes is for you to attend an interview during Spring Festival at any time that is suitable for you. This will take approximately 30 min and will be quite informal. The interview will be recorded so that it can later be transcribed. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time and withdraw without giving any reason. All information collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Names will be removed from any data to prevent participants being identified. Only myself and my supervisors will have access to the data. A lot of research has been done on meditation from a quantitative perspective but not much is available from a qualitative perspective on meditation in general or meditation retreat in particular. Thus your participation would indeed be greatly appreciated! ☺

If you want to participate or have any questions please contact me by:
e-mail: ana.teresa37@gmail.com or mobile: 07772914810.

Thank you for your consideration!

Yours faithfully,
Ana Teresa

ANEXO C

Questionário Demográfico

Age:..... **Gender:** F.....M.....

Nationality:.....

Occupation:.....

Do you consider yourself to be a Buddhist?

Yes.....No.....

Are you ordained?

Yes.....No.....

ANEXO D

Autorização – Consent Form

I confirm that I am over 18 and willing to take part in the meditation retreat study conducted by Ana Teresa Branco.

Name:.....
(if ordained please refer you lay name as well as your ordained name)

Signature:.....

Date:

Please could you include your e-mail, adress or telephone number in order that I can contact you:

Adress.....
.....

.....
.....

Telephone number:.....

E-mail:.....

THANK YOU!

Ana Teresa Branco

ANEXO E

Entrevistas com seis participantes acerca da
“Experiência de Estar em Retiro de Meditação Budista”
(Dados em bruto)

Participante 1:

I: Thank you so much for accepting to talk to me and...I wonder if you can tell me, try to describe the experience of being on this retreat, the...

P1: It's actually...The experience of being on retreat for me it's absolutely wonderful because I love retreat. I find I progress, you know? Quite quickly and the meditations are very deep but also at the same time a lot of, I call them "gremlins", you know? Delusions and self-grasping, come up very very strongly for me and I think that they're easier to see on retreat because you don't have a lot of distractions of daily life. Because your mind is so concentrated and you are very subtle and very deep, so therefore I find it quite. But it's easier to see your delusions and...And actually identify your delusions; which delusions are coming up...and sometimes they come up very very strong and it's very difficult to let them go because you grasp so strongly and...Yeah, I did find that in this retreat...To begin with it was really blissful. It was wonderful to be in retreat, you know? And doing the preliminaries, Mahamudra preliminaries, which was... That was great but then the delusions strongly started to appear, quite strongly...So, I was able to eventually deal with them by putting myself in Dorje Shugden's Mandala and I was able to control them more and then my mind became more peaceful and I was able to concentrate on the meditations and concentrate on the practice, the Mahamudra practice of ...So, yeah it was a...

I: And what about this last one, the Lamrim retreat?

P1: The Lamrim, the one before this Mahamudra? Oh, this short one? That was wonderful!...As you know I did that last year with you at Tharpaland. It was just before I got

ordained. It was absolutely wonderful. It's the most beautiful retreat. It really is. I think, you know? A very joyful mind, happy, happy mind, joyful. It was really great. I'm not saying, you know? Delusions haunt us all the time; they come up all the time as you know... (Laughter) Yeah, that...That's always a lovely, blissful retreat, you know? That's such a beautiful retreat and The Three Principal Aspects is such a lovely practice, I mean, the meditation we had this morning...

I: How was the practice during the retreat? The Three Principal Aspects of The Path?

P1: Ah! Wonderful...Because we just went through, as we're going through now with Geshe-la in the meditations...Yeah, I just find that retreat so blissful you know? I find the meditations it's, it's not like the Snows Retreat. OK delusions do come out but they're not so strong. And The Three Principal Aspects, it's a short retreat, you know? It's only a week and it's a short retreat...Yeah, I...I'm just trying to think, you know? Because the Snows Retreat it's quite, quite close to...I think a lot of what happened in the Snows Retreat, you know?...And I just see the last retreat as the...A very blissful, peaceful retreat. A wonderful retreat with lovely teachings and meditations you know? And I think following on so close from the Snows Retreat...Because it always takes me back, especially Snows Retreat, 4 to 5 weeks of coming out of retreat. So I probably, we're still in that retreat mode and The Three Principal...When we went into the last Lamrim retreat, so it was... Hu...Yeah...

I: And what do you think makes it so blissful, for you?

P1: I think it's being...I mean I love meditation and I love retreat, you know? I think I must have done a lot of retreat in past lives... Because I just love retreat and I always feel... (Pause) How do I feel on retreat? I just feel (pause)...Gosh! I can't find words to explain how I feel on retreat...I just think that there's where I want to be all the time. Which is not really helpful for other people (laughter)...I just...I can't put it into words actually...I find the teachings, being in Tharpaland which is a very very special place and all the blessings, you know? At Tharpaland and also Venerable Tarchin's teachings... I mean Venerable Tarchin is the most wonderful teacher you know? Who he is and you feel his love and his real wish for you to progress and practice the Path and to attain Liberation and Enlightenment, you know? And, yeah...

I: So that's part of the blissful experience...?

P1: Yeah, I think so... It's a...Yeah...

I: When you say delusions do manifest when you are on retreat, how is that?

P1: I think it's as I said before, you know? Your mind is so subtle, we're so internal and what comes up in your mind there's no other distractions to stop you from seeing your delusions and I think they manifest quite strongly because of that. Because you're not outside and you're not rushing around doing the shopping or racing to class or you know? Doing something else. You're actually in retreat and you are looking at yourself. You're not looking at anything else. It's an opportunity to actually look at yourself and look at your ignorance, your self-grasping, you know? That is the opportunity in retreat, because that's all you doing. That's your mind you're looking at because you're silent; you're not speaking to anybody. Because what we normally do is when we're feeling bad or you know? You may be feeling a bit of anger at something or someone has annoyed you, you want to talk to someone about it...And like "You know what he did?" and this sort of thing, you know? And that's what we do but in retreat you can't do that, you've got to deal with it yourself and you actually deal with it by practicing the Dharma, you know? And your usual practice is to actually either try to abandon or control that delusion. Stop it. Just stop that delusion, you know? Don't give it any attention and you're able to do that in retreat, whereas in...OK it comes up and you not quite probably as acutely aware because there are so many other distractions when you, you know? When you're out in the ordinary world, if you like. That's what I find anyway and I think that's a wonderful part about retreat is that you can actually look deeply at yourself and see what you have to try and abandon. What your delusions are, what... You know? Which is your strongest delusion, what keeps coming up and I think in retreat we have the opportunity to do that and you can constantly do it whereas out, you know? It's quite different because I know when we first came out of silence I was really shocked at how strongly that self-grasping and this ignorance just came back. "Voom"! Like that, you know? The delusions just came back so... And I know I got quite upset about that because I'd managed to control them even though they were quite strong I had managed to control them so I had quite a...A nice period when even though they were coming up they were not quite so strong and I was able to control them and we had that mind, you know? And when we came out of retreat and we started talking, slowly coming out and we started talking, they were there. Just like that and that was quite shocking and I think a lot of people experienced that, you know? It was difficult to deal with...

I: Because you were so aware of it?

P1: Oh yeah! Yeah, completely aware. You are controlling your delusions all the time. You are controlling all this anger, self-grasping and in retreat you're sitting next to people and things annoy you, you know? Someone might make a constant noise or do something that really annoys you on retreat and you can write a letter complaining about it and let the managers deal with it or you can practice the Dharma and practice love and compassion and that works. So all the time, you know you're...Yeah, practicing the Dharma, you know?

I: So when you say practicing the Dharma...

P1: What you're doing is using the Dharma to actually by practicing Love and Compassion for someone who is maybe annoying you, someone who is sitting behind you and constantly making noises...I mean, I had one experience of that. Someone behind me...What annoys me on retreat is people who whisper things.

Now I've done that myself, so, you know? This is like I've done, so I'm experiencing it (laughter) and I have always...found that that really disturbed my practice when...if I was meditating.

I: So what would happen?

P1: What would happen? I'd feel this annoyance coming up and I... I mean, that is just anger. When someone is doing something that annoys you, you know? Anger is quite subtle at stages, you know? So what I did was I practiced Love and Compassion and I turned it around completely and I stopped being annoyed and I loved that person and had compassion for them. So you can do that in retreat, you know? So, yeah...

I: So when you say that you practiced Love and Compassion, how would you do that?

P1: I would rejoice in their virtue and their merit of being in retreat and you see all the things that people do in retreat and you...Nice, kind things that person had done for someone else and I would think of all these things and also think that this person is my mother and this person has loved and cherished me in the past so, you know?

I would try and work it and practice in that way so that I would not feel this

annoyance...Because it's upsetting for yourself that these things come up, you know? Because we don't like to think that we're angry or jealous or anything else like that you know? I think we prefer not to even look at that because we don't want to acknowledge that we have these, you know? Delusions keep on coming up, that's the word! (Laughter) We don't want to acknowledge that we get angry. We don't want to acknowledge that we get jealous or attached at this or that or resent anything. We don't want to acknowledge all of that. But I find in retreat that we really have to acknowledge it, you know? And do something about it. I did anyway (laughter).

I: Why do you think that is?

P1: Do you mean why we don't want to acknowledge it? It's uncomfortable! That's unpleasant. I mean... And if we want to get rid of it we got to do something about it and that's painful and we don't want that pain. We don't want to suffer that so therefore we just tuck it away, you know? We just shut it down and we and we think "OK that's fine, we've dealt with that" and in natural fact we haven't, it's still there and it still keeps coming up.

I: So is that part of the experience of being on retreat that you choose to get on and deal with all those minds?

P1: Yeah, uh...That's one of the benefits I find from retreat. Is going on retreat and dealing with those minds. Because I've dealt, I mean... I went to the snows retreat the year before and that was an extremely hard retreat for me. That was my first snows retreat, that was 4 months. And a lot of things came up for me, you know? That I thought in the past, you know? "That's no problem!" you know? "I've overcome these". But it just came up really strong and it was extremely difficult for me but I faced them and I thought I just...stop these. I'm not going to shut them back down again, I'm going to deal with them and I did, you know?...Sometimes wee (*little) residues come up because I don't think, you know? The imprints are still there and probably part of it is still there. And retreat is wonderful for that because you are just looking at yourself, you know? And that's not easy to do. (Laughter)

I: So when, when you say that all these things come up and then you deal with them, how is that process?

P1: The process, what happens is that it arises, you know? Whatever it is that...Something

from the past that's been very painful, hurtful. I don't know whether it is because it's karma... I mean this is karma but from previous lives ripening in this life and then it does come up as very painful experiences in retreat and I actually was supported by the Sangha and they gave me advice because I talked to them about it. I needed to. Talk to them about it and I was given meditations and practices to do to help with that and I did that throughout retreat and it turned everything around, you know? And it just, you know? I just felt, just so much...A deep, deep wish that this would never happen again, there would be no pain and nobody should suffer in the way that, you know? That's the way I felt and the whole thing turns around beautifully, you know? And, yeah, retreat enabled me to do that.

I: So the advice you were given were specific meditations for what you were experiencing.

P1: Yeah, yeah.

I: That's beautiful...

P1: Yeah. Yeah, it's wonderful.

I: And you're saying you used the experience of this pain that was coming up so to develop this wish that other people would not suffer as well. How was that?

P1: That other people wouldn't suffer? Because the suffering was so, so painful and the people who were suffering, it was really...I was part of that suffering but there were other people who were really suffering and...Because I was angry at that, that manifested as an anger, you know? And I was angry and I didn't want to be angry. I had to change. I didn't want to feel that anymore and I felt pain for the people that were feeling, that were suffering and I was angry as well so, you know? I just practiced for the whole of the retreat. This came up really early on in retreat, so for the whole of retreat, the 4 months, I worked very hard at my practice so that I could change that and that anger completely disappeared and Love and...Come up and real Compassion that nobody should ever suffer the way these people had suffered and that...My anger completely dissipated. It disappeared and it was just a great Love and a deep, deep wish that nobody should

I: It seems very personal, whatever happens...

P1: Yeah, it was very personal.

I: Because you could think that one goes on retreat and all people would have similar, I don't know, doing the teachings and you go into the same sessions, but it seems from what you are saying that everybody is doing sort of their own retreat because of...

P1: Yeah, I think so, definitely. Because everything that comes up for each individual is quite different because their experiences are quite different, you know? The way they see things are different, the meditations are different, everything, every individual has their own thing that comes out and other people suffered a lot too. I know other people had, you know, a lot of suffering and experiences that came up in retreat and it changes things, it changes things...

I: How do you think it changes things?

P1: I think you become more peaceful and it changes you from being an angry person to someone who has a wish that nobody suffers. That's what it did for me anyway. And I think it softened me, you know? It softens your heart. Yeah, and I think that you probably consider other people a lot more. See their pain a lot more. You wish everybody to be happy and to be free from suffering. I'm not saying I'm perfectly in that, you know? Because I still have a lot of delusions and self-cherishing and ignorance and the rest of it. I mean, but... You know? It has made a huge difference to my life and the way I see other people and...Yeah...and Myself...

I: And yourself?

P1: Oh, yeah! And myself because I was quite hard on myself, I still am but...Yeah...

I: So how did the way you see yourself change in retreat?

P1: You see the changes after retreat. You don't see things so much in retreat. Yeah, I just thought that, you know? I never thought that I was a particularly nice person to people (laughter) you know? And I know that's not true, you know?

It... That changes. It changes you, yeah...

I: So you were seeing that when you back to your life after coming out of the retreat?

P1: Yeah...Yeah...Yes you do.

I: And how was that?

P1: Going out of retreat and...There was a lot of...It was not easy, you know...

Oh! This time?! It was wonderful. Yeah, it was a lot easier this time.

I: Right.

P1: Yeah, because there were a lot of blessings and you sort of...Yeah, you know? It was a lot easier. Yes, things will come up but...Venerable Tarchin talks about the “boings” when you come out of retreat. There’s plenty of “boings”! (Laughter)

I: What’s that, the “boings”?

P1: Well, when something sort of happens and you think “Ah! Back in Samsara!”

(Unpleasant facial expression as if in pain)

I: So it’s really painful?

P1: It can be, you know? But you just think “OK, that’s OK” you know, “that’s OK”. (Soothing expression)

I: So the “boing” is the initial shock?

P1: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

I: So what do you do with it?

P1: What you do is you look at it and you think “Well, that doesn’t exist, it just doesn’t exist”

I: When you say it doesn't exist....what? And that makes it better?

P1: Oh, yeah, definitely!

I: And what do you do then?

P1: Then you try and just put it aside and just, you now, well, it's there, it just doesn't exist, it just doesn't exist, just do whatever you're doing with a peaceful mind.

I: So it gives you that space to react to the situation in a different way?

P1: Yeah, yeah, definitely!

I: So would you say that you've been able to learn that through doing retreat as well?

P1: Oh, definitely yes! I've learnt a lot doing retreat, definitely. Retreat for me has been, I mean... I know I'm quite fortunate because a lot of people don't have the opportunity to go on retreat and I have had, you know? A lot of opportunity to go on retreat so I've done that and I have progressed in the Dharma very quickly being on retreat. And I think if I hadn't done retreat I wouldn't be who I am now, this retreat has done so much to me.

I: And how does that progress...How do you feel that progress? How can you tell?

P1: I think you can tell through your daily life. You've got a very peaceful mind, a different approach to things instead of being frantic about things because I was constantly frantic about everything, you know? (Laughter) Always in a hurry, racing here racing there, doing everything, you know? And my mind wasn't peaceful about things. I used to be "Oh! I've got to do this!" and get anxious about things and ..."I need to get this done!" I don't get that so much now. Everything is much more peaceful and I'm much more at a quieter pace. My mind is a lot more peaceful, I can see what I'm doing more clearly and can see what needs to be done more clearly, yeah...

I: So not only you were peaceful during retreat but coming out of retreat in your daily life, it does affect your experience?

P1: Oh, yes! Yeah...yeah...yeah...definitely.

I: How wonderful!

P1: (laughs) Yeah! ...

I: I can see why you enjoy so much...

P1: Yeah, retreat is very special, it's been...

I: ...You keep mentioning a lot of benefits.

P1: Yeah, oh yeah! Definitely! (Laughter) definitely!

I: Let's see how we are doing with time...We have to go...Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

P1: Hmm, you know? I would dedicate and wish that you could go on retreat and enjoy the snows retreat! (Laughter)

I: Thank you so much!

P1: Especially with venerable Tarchin who is such a wonderful being...

Participante 2:

I: So can you describe for me the experience of being on this meditation retreat?

P2: Which one would you like me to talk about?

I: The last one you've been on.

P2: OK, the one I think it's the the Pre-Spring Festival one. It was wonderful because I felt that I dived straight in without any effort. As you know I'd been at Tharpaland twice before.

Once for a Post Spring Festival Retreat, 3 years ago and then the second half of the Snows last time and I think a great foundation has been laid and I think also with the work that I had done since and the teaching. I felt, I felt the discursive mind was..I was able to set aside more easily and I realized that this time I still had lots of thoughts and distractions (laughter) but I was able to return more quickly to...To whatever the focus of the meditation was and it felt like...Yeah, my discursive mind and the kind of obsessional thinking was much less...Reduced, yeah. And Tarchin started off with the first line of The Principal Aspects of The Path about the Spiritual Guide and talked about that and that really drew my attention to him and just what a deep lovely being he is and how I must really trust him and I think he and I are both similar and different, you know? With my stuff on psychological type. I think he's an introverted feeling type, which I think you may be I don't know. And I'm an extroverted thinking type, quite different but we both have intuition. So, so I don't know, he represents an opposite for me but one I can understand and feel drawn to and...Yeah, yeah...So, yeah...I'm just thinking now of Sandy who was one of the people on the retreat, who is the Admin. Director in Glasgow, at the thank you party for him at the end of the last Snows Retreat asked me would I kind of make a thank you speech for Tarchin. Well that was a wonderful privilege and an honor and I told them about how I kind of got the connection with Tarchin and talked about his wild poetic imagination and then retold the story that he told three years ago that had me connect with him about how everybody is our mothers. Do you know that story?

I: No. Would you tell me that story?

P2: Oh yeah, sure! So, a Jen who, I don't know if that's the Slavic name for a John but...John had immigrated from Sarajevo when he was 17, when the troubles were there. And he'd done really well, he'd been to the London Business School and had really established himself in the business career and he was hurrying one day towards the London Subway to go to the city and he noticed that people were kind of skirting around the front of the underground station and then a few more steps later he sort of...A smell reached his nostrils and then he looked. There was someone with a hat, you know? Out sitting slumped against the side of the subway station column with the hat out begging. He looked at the hat, looked up and it was his mother whom he hadn't seen for 10 years! So he dropped his briefcase and took her in his arms and inside half an hour he was back in his apartment in London, bathing her. So I thought, this was Tarchin's teaching on recognizing everybody as your mother! (moved). So he's a very special being. So that's how it was, that's how the

retreat was for me, a kind of profound and...(sigh) I really am resonating most to the teaching on Emptiness. It's a remarkable three pages. I think, you know, the Renunciation, Bodhichitta and Emptiness and...Possibly because I started teaching that as a sort of intermediate between GP and FP, I've been given that opportunity, and we just managed to stop (laughter) for the summer, before we got to Emptiness, so this is beautiful and there were those two days after the retreat ended so that the monks and nuns would come back down. So I asked Tarchin how I could best use those two days staying up there, perhaps solitary and he suggested that I meditated on the Emptiness of the I. So that's what I did.

I: And how was that experience for you?

P2: It was(sigh)...It was good, it was good. I just (laughter)... It was funny both on and off the cushion because as you may have guessed I'm an extrovert and so I went into silence after saying goodbye to everybody. So I had two days...But I did feel...Yeah, I had my breakfast in the other room, you know? Quietly, but I thought the meals I'm going to go in with everybody talking and things but I'm just not going to say anything and it was really interesting because it was really like a medi...I realized how much, you know? I kind of want people to feed me energy, as an extrovert and that was just...Interesting to see that mind at work. So, yeah, it was...Lots of insights and it seems to be...That mind seems to be spontaneously occurring at different points in the...In the festival here...

I: OK.

P2: Yeah and it's been a different experience. For the first time I volunteered as a steward and...And off course you can't close your eyes and you can't write notes. So I think that would have been really difficult a few years ago...But, but I think, in all humility, I've developed a stability now, so you can go into that state, you know? Without necessarily having your mind, you know? Your eyes closed and it seemed to me almost...Not quite no matter what the teaching but very often and it didn't even seem necessarily related to it but, off course obviously Geshe-la's teaching this morning...To provoke that mind of the Emptiness of Self and...Yeah....How he described it was, it's like a little advanced from last year. When I wanted to do the Meditation on Emptiness last year I just imagined those low clouds over Tharpaland just kind of washing back and forth across the forest, you know? Sometimes you'd see the edge of the fur trees and sometimes you wouldn't. This time it was, with Tarchin's teaching on Emptiness, what I got. I guess this tells you my image, do you

know about LOP in your Linguistic Programming? No? OK. So anyway there's the idea that people represent their experience in different ways and so I think this is a visual, kinesthetic visual kind of metaphor, I imagined...Oh! Do you now those films of clouds, you know? And you speed it up so you see the clouds? So, it felt like that. There was a sort of an opening and then the clouds were sort of like moving but not completely obscuring them, and opening and going in and out and that seemed to be a powerful image of Emptiness and especially the Union of The Two Truths because there was something there and yet it wasn't there. So, and that was accompanied by a kind of reduction in intention in my stomach, I felt there was a letting go there because, you know, there...What's this solid structure, I mean, a fairly organized structured person, so it was like a dissolving of all of that. Not forgetting it but just being softer with it.

I: And the image...Did you use the image of the clouds to have the contemplation for your meditation, to get to the feeling of the “Emptiness of the I”? Or did it come from the feeling of the “Emptiness of the I”? Sort of as a, I don't know, as a visual kind of meditation? I'm kind of wondering how that happened for you...

P2: Yeah, for sure...Yeah, how it happened I think is that for the first time it came up out of the words that Tarchin said and my response to them. Then I...Then that image just spontaneously came up. That was probably the first time and now in a more intentional way I'll say “OK, I'll meditate on the...” you know? When it was time to do the meditation on the solitary, you know, I'd deliberately use that.

I: To go back to...

P2: Yeah, that's right.

I: Could you tell me more about that? Of using an experience you've had on your retreat with a Retreat Master to then go back to your solitary retreat and...

P2: Well, I think, as I say Tarchin made a deep impression on me and...So I often do go back.Perhaps it's because, you know, I'm still very much in the space of the retreat, under a week away and so my memory of Tarchin and his face is very...I came to that readily and now I'm...What's happening to me is that I'm remembering the first time I saw him when he gave the introductory talks three years...I think it was four, no it was five. Five 5 years ago he

did the introduction. And just seeing him when he did his prostrations before he spoke was only...And he reminded me of the person who I probably had the most spiritual experience with...I'm not sure if you've heard of her, she's a Hindu Avatara, Mother Mira?

I: No, never heard of her...

P2: OK. She lives just outside Frankfurt. And I wrote...I can actually send you stuff on her. She had a big... She changed me from being a, a sort of a relaxed post-modern constructivist psychologist saying "Well, you know, religion is interesting, it's like marriage, it can be for better or worse but...I'm interested in it but I'm not sure about the ultimate nature of things" and my experience with her was...She just gives a, what in Hinduism is called Darshan. Which is the gift of presence and she just looks at you and...Just an incredible experience and then she'd drop her gaze and it was the signal for you to put your head on her lap and she would just hold, hold the back of it for about twenty five seconds and...And then relax her grip and then you just, you know, get up and then next person will come forward and...That...What was happening there I couldn't explain it away in the usual way that I did or sort of non committal way. I'm just left with the experience, in order to do justice to the experience I had to say "No, there was something like coming from the other side". So, that opened me up and that was now twelve years ago... although I went for three years of my last experience with her was probably about nine...Yeah nine. Nine years ago. So seeing Tarchin reminded me of her...Yeah! That's interesting! I hadn't liked up those two, that intentional....What's come to be an intentional meditation experience on Emptiness with my actual perception of her and then of Tarchin. It's like, when Mother Mira first came into the room...It's interesting. It's like there's this swirling energy around her and then it went into her head and it sort of cleared...The nearest analogy I can think of was the water going over the Niagara Falls. It's like it just frequently slips over and then it becomes all this clouds and things, you know? But as you go and it's all quite, you know? And this whole energy was disappearing and I had a similar experience with Tarchin, there was this sort of like...Energy. It's what the Catholics, mystical theologians talk about being recollected, being so kind of collected inside and recollected, and when he did his prostration, yeah...So...

I: And that was the first time you met him?

P2: Ye...No, that was when I sort of made...Declared the intention to myself, and probably being and extrovert to everybody else...I talked to... About... "I'm going to come back, I'm not

going to come back to Summer Festival next year, I'm going to just save up my time and then come for the Snows Retreat". Eighteen months later, that's what I did.

I: So that's from the impact of having seen him and reminding you of that experience?

P2: Yeah, yeah, I just...Yeah, I'm going to do it! Which is interesting, I think the very first Summer Festival which would have been the year before that, someone introduced me to him and, you know, it was nice and we're both psychologists and things like that but it was seeing him, feeling him teach in that role the next year that...that...I got it.

I: And what was it? That?

P2: Just the sort of...The great ocean of being in which he lived.

I: And you though that by engaging in retreat you could come to experience something similar or come closer to that experience that you say you felt in a way? Or?

P2: See, that allowed me then to connect up with all this...All the testimonials I had from the other... Because I lived just outside of Toronto and when I connected with the New Kadampa it was a little bit like arriving at a party where people said "Oh! We just had the greatest guest and he's just left" , you know? And there's a sense in the room of his or her presence but he's not actually there and that's how it was in....I got connected with the NKT...I think it was 2000 and I took my first weekend Empowerment on Je Tsongkhapa and Heart Jewel in the September and he, Tarchin had left to go back to Scotland that September but I heard all the stories about him, so that was...So having that experience two or three years later helped me then connect I knew what a powerful teacher he was. Twenty two people were ordained in Toronto in his seven years there and...Yes! What I said is he was a Mother Mira that talks! Because Mother Mira would not talk and when he talked he was this most obeying, amusing man, you know? New Yorker. Just, you know? Immensely...Immensely warm and intelligent...So, yeah! That's interesting how my spontaneous association just has you reminded me of my mother. My mother was an introverted feeling type but she wasn't intuitive, she was a sensing type. She couldn't say very much and things and so Tarchin has this, you know? As I say this wild imagination that I just admire.

I: And the experience of being on retreat under his guidance?

P2: Sorry?

I: The experience of being on retreat under his guidance? How was that?

P2: Oh! Absolutely! It's completely safe there, I feel very safe, yeah. And don't have...you know? As you know I think I had my solitary there which was three years ago. I went up after the Spring Festival, did the retreat, it was on the Medicine Buddha and then stayed for eighteen days solitary retreat. I saw him at the beginning and actually...Yeah there was something that came up, I think about six days in, and so I saw in then and then it was actually Shri who did my debriefing at the end because he was called away to...Those days they were looking to buy a Centre up in Loch Lomond, he was involved in negotiations so he wasn't there (pause) but it didn't really matter that he wasn't there, it's the frame work and the atmosphere of love that... I mean, the so called Tharpaland Managers, I mean, they are so loving because they feel loved so it's all the same energy in a way...

I: That team?

P2: Uhum, yeah...that's right.

I: When you say something comes up in retreat (he looks lost and surprised) because something came up and you wanted to...

P2: Yeah...

I: What is it like?

P2: Well, it was like when the mind goes...Can go crazy (laughter). Nothing really out of control in the sense of one's total being but the mind sort of...Wondering what to do with the thoughts, you know? Oppressive thoughts. I haven't talked about my experience much with other people, whether that's what goes on for them... Oh yeah! Paul mentioned (laughter) going down, we drove down together, his first retreat...no, someone asked him...that was neat! Because this all was disclosed as I just sat silently, I should keep my mouth shut more because interesting stuff comes out, as you know as a therapist, they asked him about "How

did you get into being the cook at Tharpaland?” He said “Well, I came up about seven years ago and I hated the food”. (Laughter) But he wasn't saying in it as something...He said “I spoiled my whole retreat, it's like I just let my mind go at that and it was like...” Oh! You know...and he said “And I decided it was a waste, this was a terrible waste and I resolved to not do it again when I came back.” And...And...He said “I didn't do it at a different retreat.” And I'm not sure if it was at the end of that second one that, anyway, the person who...Who was cooking decided to quit. (Laughter) So... So he decided to do it! So, you know, so obviously other people get preoccupied with things and this was one of the good things about this retreat. I realized there was a sense in which I was favoring my delusions or my distractions rather at previous times and it was like I could catch myself this time. Yeah, one...The only really strong obsessional thoughts I had was actually my last day on my solitary this time. I decided to go do the ring-walk two hour and all of us...Yeah...I just got preoccupied with the fact that the bed and breakfast... I couldn't recall that they had confirmed on my e-mail, there was a confirmation over the phone and I gave my credit card and it was interesting but I was able to sort of like...It was quite a driven thought but I...I didn't get...I couldn't control it but I didn't get so upset by it and then half way through the walk it just disappeared and...And then when I came back next day and we could talk I just said “Can I call?” (Laughter)...It was like, Oh! ...and yeah there was a... And at the time I said “Chris, you know, this is...” Yeah...So, it was helpful to do the meditation because this was the end of my meditation on the me, it's like so, you know, you're going to have...You're going to be preoccupied with your discomfort because what does it mean, you know, you won't have a place to lie, you won't have...You're going to be uncomfortable, so... So, anyway, it was helpful to see my mind...How I was attached to my comfort, because that's basically what the anxiety about the bed and breakfast was.

I: So not only you were more aware of the thoughts that were going on through your mind, but you were able to relate to them in a different way?

P2: Exactly, yes! Yeah, the secondary or tertiary elaboration of it was different.

I: Was that part of what you do when you're on retreat?

P2: I think that's one of the opportunities, it's to really kind of look...Look at your reactions...Yeah...And I suppose the role of the Retreat Master or person is to create that frame work, both in terms of what they communicate in their presence but also in their

instructions. Because what was helpful was...Tarchin just quoting Geshe-la saying...Yeah, "Distractions are the greatest obstacle to spiritual realizations because they feed your mind to your delusions" or something to that effect. And come of "Wow!"...OK, so there's that very strict relationship between distractions and delusions so I thought "Hum, well I'll put more effort into...Into not playing with them, not entertaining them."

I: So what did you do when they were arising? Like any distraction? I imagine you'd have some during your retreat...

P2: Oh, I did. I certainly did, certainly did. Yes, I would... Well it was helpful coming back to that image of the...The...That picture of Tarchin when he talked about the Spiritual Guide. I'd just come back to that and it kind of softened, softened the mind...

I: It's time for us to finish...Would you like to say anything before we finish?

P2: Not really, I'd just like to thank you, I love talking about this stuff and it's a great opportunity.

I: It's been great listening and learning from you.

P2: Thank you.

I: Thank you.

Participante 3:

I: So, can you tell me how it was for you, the experience of being on this meditation retreat?

P3: It was good, it was very good, I felt it was...Things made sense...Do you want a sort of specific example of something that...?

I: Yeah.

P3: Maybe two or three years ago I'd seen a television program about alternative medicines and in that they were looking at the placebo effect. Well, one of the studies was in America, and it was people that had bad knees. The other group...They'd split them into three. Each person went into surgery and when they went into the operating room, the surgeon would open an envelope. One of the groups did not get a new knee and the surgeon didn't see anything. He just showed up within the operating theater what was written on the card and they then played a video of an operation going ahead and the surgeon cut the person's leg open as if they had had a new knee, asked for all the right equipment at the right times, etc. And it was two years later that the people were actually told that they hadn't had a new knee operation. The person who was doing the programme interviewed one of the people that hadn't had a new knee operation and it was an experiment and he said that, you know, it was seven years ago and he had no problems, his knee was fine. Before the operation he could hardly walk on his knee, after the operation it was great. And, you know, I kept thinking, you know, I know the mind is powerful, I believe that it's... You know? We're using like 0.1 of a percent of what it's capable of but I still kept finding it difficult, you know? How can the mind fix something physical that's wrong, like bones? You know, I could understand with other things that were wrong but, you know, to bones that are damaged how can the mind fix those? And being on retreat and, you know, we start talking about Emptiness. Suddenly it dawned at me, off course the mind can, because the body is not wholly there, it's just a perception, off course the mind can heal bones that appears, you know, something solid. So the thing is, you know, that... That was...Was just like a kind of whole new awareness that...I was having a wee (*little) walk myself and I started going "Yeah! Off course! That's how, that's why it works!" It was a great feeling of realizing that I couldn't explain this.

I: So how did it feel, having that insight?

P3: Really, really good. But being able, not so much being able to explain that thing but sort of, well, understand a tiny thing, a wee bit of what Venerable Tarchin is talking about. About inherent existence, you know? That's actually starting to make a wee bit of sense to me and it felt good, you know? It's made me want to really kind of consolidate more my study, my meditation, you know? Make a bit of an effort so that I can understand a lot more.

I: And all of that because you were having a personal experience of what the teachings during the retreat were?

P3: Yes. Yes.

I: So do you think that happened through your meditation? Through your experience of being on the retreat meditation?

P3: Yes. Yes. Yes, definitely. Yes, obviously. You know what? I wasn't aware that I was thinking anything about that programme but it was obviously there somewhere, you know? In my mind. And it just, you know, obviously came to the fore (*front) at some point during the meditation and... You know? But yeah, it was...That made sense, I understand it now...

I: So that happened during one meditation?

P3: No, no. It wasn't during the meditation. It was just after, just when...Because normally when we'd finish the meditation session I'd go and have a wee walk before going back to the house, and it was on... Just there when I left and it was...Only, you know, a five minute walk so it was just after that and...So, no, it wasn't actually during the meditation. It was a short while after I'd been for a walk. You know I'm starting to understand, obviously I know a tiny, tiny wee percentage on the big scheme of things but at least when you get that wee insight and that helps, encourages you. (Laughter)

I: I can imagine that from what you are saying.

P3: Yes.

I: So do you think that the experience of being on retreat has made you, because you said that suddenly things made sense, so are there other things that started making sense with the experience you were having on the retreat? Such as the example you've just given?

P3: That was the main thing I remember. I know there were some other smaller things but I can't...

I: That was the one that influenced you?

P3: Yes, Uhu. Yes, you know the other things at the time were significant but now they've sort of faded to the background and I know they were... You know, I know they were silly wee things that, you know, you thought "Oh, yeah. All right." But... I remember when... We were discussing how inherent existence, didn't exist... how things didn't... Didn't have a name... Didn't inherently exist and we were in groups discussing about it... Somebody was talking about a seed. You know, a seed can't inherently exist because it sprouts and grows into a plant and you know? So if it was plant then were has the seed gone and... That, that was quite a good treat. That was a good example. To start trying to understand things.

I: And that was during a talk with other people?

P3: Yeah.

I: Had you come out of silence?

P3: No, no, no. It was actually during one of the sessions. We were put into groups and told that we could talk just during... Just in groups and it was trying to... To... It was looking at how the world would be if things inherently existed... Right... hum... You know, up to that point... You know... You just, except what you think you see. You know of course, you know that trees there, there is a tree there, it's not a wee something that materialized. Oh, no... You know... if there was a tree there then there would always be a tree... Hum... So... It was just there just a sort of a wee thing that during the discussion, that I thought "Yes, yes! Helps explain things".

I: Wow, so how was that? Trying to... During the discussion trying to... Imagine things or see them as being inherently existent and how the world would be, so it was kind of ?..

P3: It, it... It was mind blowing... Mind blowing for me because I was with a group of mainly ordained people.... Right... And the other two that weren't ordained... You know.. Had both been involved for years. Some of the things that were then said were just... (laughter) "OK, that's gone right over my head"... But... But no, it was, it was a really good discussion and... .. It was just so much that you don't think about until somebody says then it makes perfect sense... You know?... If we were inherently existent... we wouldn't be able to move we wouldn't be able to do anything..... Nothing would move. Because it would be solid it would be

there...It was just mind blowing.

I: So it seems like it was really personal, you were given a teaching and then you were really taking...

P3: Yes, yes it was from that point the retreat was good, because there was a wee teaching and then a meditation afterwards, and...So the way it was done you had time in the meditation, to really think about things... Personal to you, you know, you were given pointers and given time just to think about it and relate, you know, it to your own thoughts relate to your own life, or to other things you were thinking about, that was... That was good.

I: And how was that experience of having... I'm thinking of what you're saying about having a teaching and then a meditation, and sort of being organised, your time being organised, when you're on retreat...

P3: It's good... I mean I've never done a solitary retreat...But no there wasn't too much just three sessions a day. Yeah, three sessions a day but yes it was good because He was discussing...He was telling us something, explaining something and then I would say that the meditation session followed it... And he was...He was guiding us through the meditation but he was giving you time to have time to follow the direction you wanted to follow and I found that very... Very... Useful. Because it would...Maybe because I haven't been doing meditation for that long my mind wanders a lot and with continual...With him, you know, giving you a wee while, you know, saying something else it... I found it kept me a lot more focused. Quite often I can't be.

I: So it was, it felt good that you had that guidance...

P3: Yes, yes, definitely, it suited me

I: So how did it feel being on a retreat guided by a Retreat Master, I wonder how that relationship was?

P3: Very special because I spent quite a bit of time up at Tharpaland and it's not that far away. I suppose I've seen Venerable Tarchin lots of times and think he is a very special person and it was lovely that being able to have the opportunity to spend time with him. OK, I

do not have a lot of people to compare him with but I think I really enjoy his teachings and I find that most of the time I can follow what he is saying. He's not talking about things and I will switch off because I don't understand what he's saying here. He's very, very, very special but it's lovely to be able to spend the time to be on retreat with such a good Meditation Master.

I: Is that why you feel he's very special to you, the teachings? And what do you think makes him, how do you feel that he is special to you personally?

P3: I think probably because the night that I spoke about Roger and??? were going down to look after Tharpaland when they went to America I had meet them before: no. had I?: no, I hadn't met them up till that point but that night at supper I was sitting beside them and we sat and spoke for quite a while and there was just something that night that I just got a real connection with them and just felt it was very special since then seeing a lot more of them. It was just everything about them, his teachings were good. I've heard him teaching various stuff in places. I was going to the GP at Tharpaland and occasionally at retreats. He always seems to have time for people, you know, some times he must really be tired and just, you know, want to go (laughter). He always seems to have time and, you know, he makes you feel special. He's got that knack

I: That is very special indeed. (Laughter) And in general the retreat conditions that you have how do you experience that the whole setting?

P3: I think you know there's something about Tharpaland that is just wonderful I think that's what makes it special. It's not somewhere that's been built as a Retreat Centre, you know, it's evolved so that everything is different. I tend to go for single accommodation because I find it difficult sleeping with, you know, with noises in the room with others sleeping in. I've slept in various different accommodations. I have also slept in a dorm and its great and I must...Before I would have gotten involved in a different relative sense given a choice give me a five star hotel I like my comforts I must admit quite happy being down there and doing a retreat before it was in a caravan but the shower was not working so you had to get up in the morning put some clothes on and go down to the shower block get a shower and back up I was quite happy doing that, it didn't bother me.

I: Is it because of what you are doing there that's worth having those conditions

because you said giving a choice before you would have preferred a five star hotel?

P3: Yes!

I: So it seems that the experience you have there whole experience

P3: Yes, yes. I probably... If it had, you know, if it was going down to, I don't know, to do something else I can't think what in particular but would be just... For the weekend away or something I would probably feel "Oh, thanks!" But, yes, I think it is the whole experience its just a special place and, you know, down there even if it's going to be doing a Puja at night, whatever, or obviously doing your own practice, you know, you are meditating at some point. Yes, I think that does make a big difference. I think that if that wasn't going on there and it was a holiday resort, you know, it wouldn't, it wouldn't feel the same definitely not.

I: And what does... how does it feel because I'm kind of wondering with all of these conditions, your mentioning being silent and having your own private accommodation and what goes on for you while you are engaging in this activity and the whole experience of doing all that and being sort of...

P3: I think looking at my own feelings and emotions and how I'm dealing with things and why, you know... For example the relationships with other people, you know? I look at how that relationship is not good you know? Why is it not good? And OK, yes I can understand because of things that have happened in the past maybe that's why I feel that way and I then try and turn it around. Ideally that's what you want to do, not quite that easy but in theory that... That a lot of the time is what I'm trying to do, you know? Just to look at things within one life and try to understand them a bit more to get the right perspective on them. If you're feeling angry with someone that happened years ago just accept that it's happened and that's it and move on. Realize that the only person I'm harming is myself and I think... I think you need this space and the time to do that, you know? I think to say to people that "Well you should look at that relationship and, you know, understand what's gone wrong with it". You can't do that when you're involved in a busy life. You need to have time out. OK, you can do it on your own a wee bit each day meditating, yes, but if you can have time to just go away for a few days or a week or longer then that's the special thing about it, you have got time to kind of look at things, look at relationships, look at your life and have time to really examine it and not be distracted or if you do, you go back to it, not run away from things

I: And how is that when you get distracted how does it happen?

P3: Dead easily. Somebody walks by and you sort of think "Oh! Who is that?" Your mind is... Sometimes you maybe looking at something that you don't want to look at, because it's painful, because...you know? That you're in the wrong and you don't like admitting it so your mind thinks about something else and, you know, you just go wondering of in a direction that's a lot more pleasant to think about

I: And what are you doing?

P3: You have got to go back to what you don't want to think about and just try and just keep working away at it. I say that's a good thing about a retreat, probably most of the meditation. Just doing meditation on your own if you're on a retreat you can't run away from things easily because it will just keep coming back until you deal with it and you have got the time to deal with it and once you have dealt with things you do feel better for it. There is no doubt about it and definitely do.

I: So how does it feel when you say you have the time and the space and the opportunity to deal with these things and also experiences that you bring from your daily life and arise in your retreat and maybe not...Some of them may not be that pleasant like your saying. So how does it affect you when you then go out of retreat back to your daily life?

P3: You take...You take some of that peace and that calm with you and I know that I've a few relationships that have changed and got better because I have spent the time thinking about it; and thinking about that it's wrong and turned it around so it's a positive...A real positive affect in your life, you know? That you go back and sometimes, yes, it's very easy to go back into old ways but hopefully you can remind yourself that...That's bad. That's the wrong way. I know what I need to do and, you know, if you do change your attitude when you go back your life gets better, you know? You improve, you know, it's not going to change dramatically over night but you improve. As I say there's a couple of relationships in particular that just by working at in my own head, my own mind, that they have improved because I have spent the time as I say thinking and meditating about it.

I: So what happened when you met that person with that situation again? Was it the

situation as you were saying...As I think you were saying was now different but you had worked on your mind?

P3: Yes, correct

I: What happened then??

P3: The relationship with both people improved. They responded to my more positive attitude

and one was actually my mum and we didn't have any serious problems but we weren't really that close; but we're now becoming very close; we are a lot closer and the other was a problem that I had with a cousin that things had happened and it would be easy to say that she treated me very badly. She realized she did and she realized she hadn't handled things as well as she should have but I decided, you know, sort of worked at it with help from one of the nuns at Tharpaland. Thought "Right, OK. I'm going to deal with this myself." And thought "OK, we are not going to be great friends but at least, you know, we can communicate with each other; we will meet up at odd times."

I: So how did you...How did you...you said you worked on it, when you were at Tharpaland with this nun...So how did you do it? What exactly...

P3: By ...A lot of it was by sending loving compassion to her; that was the main thing. Keep thinking of her and sending her a lot of love and compassion. By continually doing that, that... My mind of anger did dispel. We decided things got better. Think there is still a bit there, you know, if I'm honest but got rid of a tremendous amount of anger towards her. That was the main thing. Also just thinking about her good qualities. Realizing the harm I was doing to myself by being angry. The main, the main practice was continually sending love and compassion to her. That worked

I: Great. I think we are about to finish. I wonder if there is anything else you would like to add before we finish... (Looks puzzled) About your experience in general.

P3: Can't think of anything.

I: Good. That's good too. Thank you so much, P3.

P3: That's alright. I don't know how much of it will actually help.

I: Oh! It's great.

Participante 4:

I: So, could you tell me, could you describe for me the experience of being on this Lamrim meditation retreat?

P4: So basically my motivation was to get deeper into these topics which are for me very important, very essential. I made long retreats before in different topics and this is always one which I have very much association with, which I appreciate very much; which I know is very very very important and an initial...Yeah...You cannot hear it often enough! (laughter) So I was looking forward to the teachings of Venerable Tarchin and to this retreat again and so one of the first experiences of this retreat was encouragement to take, from the renunciation for example, to take things really personal, to...I got this feeling of...To emphasize this more because...especially renunciation you can deal with it very intellectually so...So I was thinking about 5 aggregates or "I have to abandon 5 aggregates" and I think "Yeah, but these aggregates are this, this and this, OK." So you make the decision and you...You make it on a more intellectual level ... But it's a first topic, Renunciation as Venerable Tarchin also taught it, it was for me really emphasizing that I take into heart, that I truly...The Renunciation is my life, is my contaminated life, my life, how I perceive things, how I perceive people, how I perceive beings, my way, my deluded way, my...So to renounce my Samsara, my Samsaric experience, my Samsaric world which is something that is in my intellect, something I know intellectually I should abandon but to feel it...Something...Is...Has to do with something...Is that what I experience now, so the way I experience it now. So this was one of the messages that especially it is, I felt especially in this retreat, that I have to welcome this, that I have to really, to see the connections, to seize its implications, of this connection and what it means for my practical life, so...So how I am dealing with this, not only intellectual but it influences really my behavior, my relations, my...Yeah...So, that was one of the, for me, one of the major points, to think of the implications it has not to really renounce, not to really have understand or take into heart what to renounce because it will

only, for me to see, to feel, to take it to heart, it will only result in suffering because I don't really...I don't really point to the problems right now...When I work, when I still continue to work on these issues but really to see how it also creates by lacking this deep heartfelt wish, this heartfelt wish to renounce this situation that...That I like to set...That I fail to set the right cause for my future lives, for these countless future lives. So it leads you to feel that it has really vast, vast, vast implications. So for the future what I am doing, what I am setting now, what I am...if I...Yeah...Not fight to bring it to heart and keep it in an intellectual level and not really live it. Live it in this way and felt it, feel it in this way, so it does something with me, this topic...That I continue to create the causes for future suffering...Because it's ignorance, it's just ignorance when I abide in just this... It's just a grasping effect at... this is what there is now, but off course this is for me anyway, this retreat was another topic, that...To overcome some resistance to make really sure that for me it's not just renouncing enjoyments, that's not the issue, but renouncing what enjoyment means to me, that I grasp at it as a source of happiness which is...Cannot function. So, yeah, it was...It is interesting for me to see... For example I like some nice foods, some nice cakes or some nice things (laughter) and to see really what my mind does with the delicious curry of Paul (laughter) at lunch time and Basmati rice

I: Cannot blame you for that... (laughter)

P4: And the portions got naturally bigger (laughter) and...What happens? This...So, to see some of these things, to watch my mind, what it really means is that there is still a bit too much attachment there or...Also to see that, off course, it does not say that I better eat bread (laughter) or have not attachment because it's for me not the issue but enjoy it with the mind of...With a relaxed mind...So it means not to renounce to this enjoyments that I have, but to...Yeah, but to find this balance that was what brought his first topic to my mind, this is two things that I will take personal, this...See what it does personally with my daily things, with my daily experience of food and of enjoyments and of something...To get then the second issues and not to renounce too much and to live it and to...Yeah...So that once again, quite interesting!, to work with this and to watch my mind, what set determination from the past. According to this topic I felt that was something already changed, something already moved (laughter). As a topic which I knew about, maybe I didn't get it right...Yeah this was a ..This was the first part of the retreat, of the renunciation part which...Yeah...Which has... I worked on these things on this topic and things came up and....

I: And how was it to work with those topics as they come up in your retreat?

P4: Yeah, this is always exciting! (laughter) Nothing more exciting as our mind! (laughter) This is more exciting than any TV; (laughter) our crazy mind...Yeah , it's, I mean, the thing is basically to be honest with myself, to see... because if you have some Dharma knowledge, if you have studied, then your mind is something really quick with answers and so there's the..."Ah! yeah, yeah, yeah, this is this and this is this..." But to really ask ourselves again and again, honestly, what's really happening with our mind; what does it really do to watch it? Sometimes maybe just make a silent watcher, to lean back and see what's going on in your mind, in my mind, what's happening and why is it happening and...So, to get a little bit of sort of feedback (laughter) from my mind itself , to see really what is going on, not only what should go on or what shouldn't go on or what's...What could to be go on (laughter), doesn't...

These things which can be quite intellectual but...Yeah, to work, to work more with...Yeah, in a relaxed way to be determined not to be biased of watching, just really see, just notice, just to get a feeling: what's good, what's worse to be worked on, what's...What's...Yeah... What's there to be from my own...From my own sense...From my own awareness of what's going on in my mind, so these honest questions...

I: Right...

P4:to ask myself these honest questions to get a real feeling, not to be biased, not to be too intellectual and....

I: So you're becoming very aware of your state of mind during the retreat.

P4: Yes, hum, definitely. And also these...Because of these powerful teachings of Venerable Tarchin and the blessings, and the group is doing the same, the same situations, the energy is conducive and conditions are conducive. This can ...Results of this can be experienced more and more...Quicker. For example if I do solitary retreat I notice the difference. When I do the same in solitary and when I do the same in a group because group energy from the teachings and the blessings... And even this is a very short retreat from my relations (laughter). It's...And I don't do it the first time. I'm always amazed how much can happen in this time and...So this is a time, yeah, for me, which is really worthwhile, I feel it's really worthwhile to go into it and to look at the things also in the break times, to keep off course

remembering on the meditation objects but also to connect what it means, really, or what's really there in my mind and what's to look and to feel and to, yeah, to see what's really going on or what, you know, the things I mentioned before...It's...It's very difficult. I found this a very tricky issue. (laughter) It goes very deep because the mind is very deceptive. Sometimes is just ...You're thinking "Oh! yeah, I got this now." And then you can have a situation where it's really proved and you see that's it's not so...And with the group together is more easy to get challenges, to get...Things are going not so right or you didn't get the things you really wanted, etc or something with...In relationship to what happens with this interaction with other people...Off course we are silent and we don't look, we don't have even eye contact, we avoid eye contact to avoid distractions(laughter) but it still...Still there are interactions, you're still relating to what other people do and how do you do these things, how do other people do. Sometimes you get upset because somebody does something too quickly for you, just moving something with their arms and (demonstrates) (laughter) they were just...Yeah...It's...So many things can happen at this time, which you usually don't notice maybe; by the way, and in this times when you get more subtle, when you get more sensitive then things can affect you more, more deeply, more...In any case it can be a very good experience of...You feel some love from somebody and you don't communicate but...Some positive feeling or energy...Sometimes these little things just trigger something out and delusion comes, just...

I: What do you do then? What happens?

P4: Yeah...It's very different, it depends on what kind of state I am at that moment, what is just present in my mind to deal with the situation, I mean, sometimes I do a sort of breathing meditation just to relax, sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't help! (laughter) it's a bit too strong. Then...I try all these different methods. Sometimes I take...Make... Taking and Giving and also to...Yeah...It depends also on what it is off course...Sometimes I remember Emptiness, it's created by my mind. Sometimes I simply remember Karma; that these things that disturbed me can only disturb me because I disturbed others in the past, so reminds me of Purification. It depends on what's just present in my mind and, yeah, what kind of method...It's also different, I noticed, to same situations sometimes different things work for me.To just let go, not suppress but to put the energy out of the anger or of the aversion...Often it's aversion, it's not really anger but yeah...Oh! Yeah...or just, really interesting! , sometimes I simply watch. If it's not too strong, if I'm not in danger to act under this (laughter) state of mind. In any kind you're connecting in very different kinds of ways,

you don't have to communicate (laughter) to let others know that you don't appreciate this or that (laughter), so...If I'm not in danger, if I feel that I'm not in danger (laughter) because these things...Sometimes I misjudge it (laughter) but then I simply watch and see what that challenge does with my mind, what power it has to affect my mind or how long it stays and what it does and I noticed often or let's say sometimes when you just watch it, and then I just watch it, somehow it disappears so I have this feeling that these negative states of mind doesn't want to be watched! (laughter) It just functions and pushes you but if you look at it and "Hu!" It just...Yeah...It's some sort of, it just loses energy, somehow, just by watching and...Or maybe just by naming it, just identifying, that's what it is and naming it, what it does and ...Then...This works when the state of the delusion is not too strong, the negative mind is not too strong, then this can work...And of course sometimes it happens that it doesn't work or I'm not quick enough (laughter) so then I have to purify it afterwards! (laughter) I am thinking and reflecting on it "I should have known better, I really should have put more effort in.." or something like this..

I: So, you go back and you reflect on it?

P4: Yes! It...Especially if ...If I was...Yeah...I mean...Sometimes...Even with this long, I have had long retreat experience; sometimes you are not so aware, not so present...The mind is so tricky, you have so many different levels you would have to control, so...You're not always really really aware and present and conscious...And simply happens what happens...Something comes up and you act something, you do something and then on a reflection, which is also wonderful time in retreat, to reflect on these things, later when you have a walk when things calm down(laughter) and really to see what happened again or what shouldn't have happened or...Yeah...So, it has this different levels of reacting, so it's very different from the topic, it's very different from the method, sometimes this works better, sometimes just watching, sometimes missing to do anything and then reflecting (laughter)...reflecting sometimes also can be positive, that...That I was happy in a situation in which I usually from the past tend to react not very balanced (laughter)! That I managed or I got at least better. But these reflections are usually shorter, just "You know, that was not too bad". But if it doesn't really work out very well then it can be big...Also...Especially in retreat, it's a... Can be a...Ending in self- exploratory approach and depressed states and pushed down by your own expectations, so it's also tricky, this is also tricky because at the end it's the same negative force, it's directed not to others but to yourself...

I: Right...

P4: Pushing yourself down which is also not good so it's also worthwhile to do something against this, so yeah....

I: How do you deal with it?

P4: With the reflection.

I: The one you just mentioned when it is not directed at others, when it's directed at you, how do you deal with that?

P4: Yeah, that's also different. It depends on how much embarrassed I am! (laughter) It depends on, yeah, how I felt this situation...One thing in retreat that I noticed also is the times that, in these retreat situations, the mind tends to...I know also from other's experience, not only mine...The mind tends to always exaggerate things, so...So, yeah, because the mind is sensitive we want to mix the mind with virtue, which is also...Which works better in retreat off course and normally, but these things can come up really big and then you see...Then you can push it down and it can be...Feel like you're a complete unworthy practitioner, complete unworthy monk. (laughter)

I: Oh, wow...

P4: So, and...Yeah...Then usually I try to...What works for me best is for example, are Prostrations because I'm doing something physical and with the mind of regret is pointing out the issue, what really affected me, what pushed me down, naming, pointing out and regretting it and doing something to solve, to dissolve this. And prostrations I noticed are quite good because it's also physical work, after a while you get, you start to sweat (laughter), you feel that you're doing something and, yeah, with a mind, with the mind of faith and with these positive minds and...Then often this helps for me, it's something which doesn't really subside with just reflecting on it, just seeing...Just sometimes I just recite some Mantras or make some smaller things but when I notice it's a bit more serious, more pain or more self exploratory reproach that something exists, then I start to make Prostrations and afterwards it feels better it feels clean, it feels also more, yeah, I have the feeling that I can relate to myself more then before and things are calming down a bit and I see my beast

more realistic relation with the situation. So this has also got different levels, sometimes I had periods when this kind of things lasted longer than a few hours, a few days but...Yeah this is measure for me, so often for me, is to do some prostrations.

I: So would you say that from being on retreat you learned to deal with these issues from your mind in a different way?

P4: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. You experience your mind in a different way than you usually experience it and this is can be quite interesting, (laughter) quite exciting! Quite scary sometimes, to feel the power of your mind and you can relate more to how your mind works, what it does with you and what are the driving forces behind it and...Merely by identifying it sometimes it's possible to keep more balance and ...But sometimes also as I mentioned in the...Basically you see these mechanisms and basically it works like that but sometimes things can be over-exaggerated, positive and negative, so sometimes you are quite high (laughter) but everything...Blissed out, spaced out and sometimes you are like in a deep depression (laughter) about everything. so...So, yeah, on one point you learn more about your mind, you learn more what it does, what power it has, how it functions, which is, yeah, very exciting. On the other hand it also throws you into more extreme reactions to every kind of thing which is beneficial for when you meditate on your meditation object, then the mind is more subtle, it can mix very...More easier than in daily life with these topics, get more into it, get more deep, can trigger out experiences more easily but... Yeah, also in other ways it can easily get quite deluded mind by exaggerating ridiculous things.

I: And how is that difference between watching your mind while you're on retreat or watching your mind in your daily life?

P4: (sigh) One difference is that the level you work on is different, so you see more clearly what's going on in your mind, you can relate to it more, you can...Relate to it on another level than busier daily life. What's...One other point is that you can...You have more time to reflect on it, so you have more time to go through the process, to look at some things, there's also one thing I wanted to mention before is that sometimes it's really worse to go into it..

I: Right...

P4: ...Really to go to something and some distractions, some specific distractions, some

specific topic comes up in your mind, something from the past, often is something from the past, then maybe it's really worse to look into it in the meditation breaks or sometimes... Even maybe to make a brief meditation on it and go "What is this? Where does this come from? Where does this energy come from?" and "This is something to be solved, something that is making something that I am not conscious". So in a retreat you have this mental space which your usually daily life, you have too much commitments or... You can feel these things but you have not so much chance really to process it, to get... To go into it and to get a sense of what it is actually. Sometimes it is amazing that you see it comes from something else, when you go into it, it's also sort of... The topics can, that can come up in a retreat, even in a short retreat you can... Your mind is more subtle and you can discover more connections which are more subtle which you are not aware usually. So maybe, I think in daily life the tendency is more to suppress things because it's not really time to deal with it, to cover it somehow and in a retreat situation you have naturally more time, if you want or not (laughter) you have more time to face these things, so you cannot just go to another distraction to get rid of it (laughter). And that can be quite challenging but it makes a retreat special, it makes it interesting, it makes very worthwhile. To face retreat situations, you know also from your own experience, sometimes it's not really (laughter) something pleasant (laughter)

I: Yeah.

P4: ...Not really honey licking, so... But this is... These other things that, also from my own experience, are really interesting and really makes it worthwhile and to face this and to face your mind, to be alone with your mind... It's really... To sit alone, sometimes I've been scared! (laughter)

I: So how does that feel, to work with your mind, to be alone with your mind, you say it's worthwhile... How is that?

P4: Scary! (laughter) Sometimes quite... Quite amusing (laughter). Sometimes it's... It's good to... To know that you can, just the situation that you know you can be alone with your mind, you don't have... It's especially scary at the beginning... When you build up retreats, when make maybe the first couple of days in a week... Because you get more confident, of the times when you face everything that's been brought up from your mind, what is in there, what is lying there. Sometimes there are some topics like anger, some fear also, which you

have to address and identify and usually in daily life if it comes and, usually there's not the time and maybe not even the wish, sometimes we don't have the wish to go deeper into it, we just go to another distraction, there are plenty of them in daily life, so, to cover it or not really to wish to work on it. And in a retreat you have to (laughter)! Especially if it's solitary retreat, it's more intense from this point of view. In solitary retreat you get your meals on the door so you don't see anybody, maybe from the distance, so we have to...To deal with it. Off course you have the Meditation Master to go to, Venerable Tarchin at Tharpaland, if it gets too bad, if it's too overwhelming (laughter) which sometimes happen, but...Yeah, once again this is very positive and you are really, you're getting stronger, you're getting the confidence, you're getting more relaxed at things that happen in your mind, more balanced, so...It might sound a bit scary sometimes when I say these things for others maybe, to have not so much good experience "Oh! Ah, can't stand this.." this is...from my experience this is, also from others, you start from somewhere, you build it up, you face the situations gradually, more and more.

And usually, especially in a blessed environment like a Retreat Centre with a Meditation Master, with his prayers, you are strong enough to deal with everything, so your mind really cannot...Shouldn't scare you really, cannot really...You don't run crazy but sometimes looks like it! (laughter) But...So, there's no real danger of freaking out or getting quite madness.

I: So because of the environment and having a Retreat Master...

P4: Yes. And for the prayers and...Also off course there's the knowledge of having a Retreat Master, having somebody to speak to if it gets too bad or if you think you cannot deal with the situation, to have some kind of emergency anchor that you can just hold (laughter) and... But often it is so that you are encouraged to go to these topics yourself, especially when you know other retreaters make the same retreat and they might have the same problems and they're doing well so that's also encouraging. The other point is that, from my experience and from others', you can deal with much more issues that you think about in the first place... That you think about this situation, to be alone with the mind and to have no escape, to have...You're just there and you have to deal somehow with it...So it's really worthwhile, it's a...Yeah, to face this situations makes you stronger makes you more confident that results are only positive. There...Only one thing you should really avoid and that is to break the retreat, to go off, then you break the process, you...It's quite bad and people who did it suffered afterwards quite a lot, so...It's not...This is really dangerous..

I: Is it something that could easily happen that you have the wish to just go away?

P4: Yeah, sometimes it happens. For me it was not so strong this issue because... (laughter) I don't know but for me it didn't really, it's been a point when...But the suffering can be...Or to avoid situations, to avoid suffering when suffering comes, especially mental suffering, then some people can really develop the strong wish to leave and some did, I know, and they regret afterwards. It's...When they come back, maybe, then it's different, something else will happen, it's different to... They have still unfinished things and they left in a state which is not good, so it's...So this is one thing I think that should be avoided but the others things really, the knowledge that you can deal with these things it's a ...Even deep, deep things can be, after you went through, after...There is also one point one big lesson, which I learned in retreat, especially in retreat conditions, is to accept suffering. When you accept, when I accept suffering, then everything was fine because the suffering comes and goes, how it comes it goes, so it's just a matter of time and... And afterwards, you have done something and this something cannot affect you anymore or maybe lesser and lesser, which means you have just exhausted something for yourself and...Yeah, to go through these things, to accept the suffering connected with topics, they are your own topics and they are there anyway, if you want them or not, but the courage to face them gives also strengths, inner strengths to deal with them and in a relaxed way so it's also one topic: to accept suffering, to...For me always think which...The ability to accept this also, not to say but...I noticed very clearly, there was a time if I acted under the influence of mental suffering, especially mental, physical is not so bad, sometimes you have physical suffering in retreat but it's...It's worse the mental, then you can get quite nervous and..(laughter)...Yeah, so to accept suffering is such a freedom, it gives such...It's such a space, such a ...Let things happen...That's courage and...Yeah, this simple practice and not to get too nervous, not to get mad about it "Oh! I have to do something, I have to do something!" Don't worry, you don't have a... Sometimes it can also be that you escape into Dharma practice, into making an Opponent Power, making...starting to recite Mantras...And sometimes...Sometimes it's...Yeah! This is really one point: to accept suffering in retreat, it makes it really strong to accept it also in daily life and to have a balanced mind, which...Which on the other hand, in my experience also helps to shorten the period of suffering, if you start to get nervous about it sometimes it gets even stronger.

I: Seems very empowering, all that you are telling. Wonderful experience in retreat.

P4: Yeah, it's quite interesting! (laughter) It's quite interesting to work with this crazy mind!

I: I think we are about to finish.

P4: Yeah.

I: Is there anything else that you would like to say before we finish? Or anything you would like to add that you have forgotten?

P4: No, that's OK.

I: Thank you so much!

P4: You're welcome.

Participante 5:

I: So can you describe for me the experience of being on this Lamrim meditation retreat?

P5: Yes, what in particular do you want to know about my experience?

I: Just in general how it was for you to be on the retreat. Anything that you feel is appropriate to tell me.

P5: Yeah, so...I've been on other short retreats and most of them involved half days of silence so in the morning you're silent and then in the afternoon you can talk to people. So, this one was different because it was...It was complete silence from a certain point on and it was much stricter, so you couldn't even make...you're not supposed to make eye contact, communicate with people in other ways, making hand gestures, you're only supposed to write a note if it was really necessary and in that case you write to one of two people...but because I had been, I had had some experience of doing small retreats with some silence; I had some expectations of what it might be like, so I wasn't really expecting that it was going to play out exactly in that way but...I'm that betting some of the people you've talked to might have described some of these things, that you feel very very still and very peaceful

and...different experiences like that. For me this particular retreat was...during the sessions I would be...I would find myself being annoyed and you...I don't tend toward annoyance, it's very small irritation, I notice it, I go "Oh! you're annoyed..." and then it goes away. But with this retreat it kept coming up. The person I was sitting next to had some habits and I talked to my Teacher about it afterwards and I told him "Things kept coming up and I kept trying to apply some kind of opponent" and I'm studying "Eight Steps to Happiness" now and we're having exam, have a written exam in the end of June and I was kidding my Teacher and saying "I think I had the practical exam on the retreat" because one of the sections in "Eight Steps" is about how kind other living beings are and one aspect of that is how...how could we practice giving with no-one to give to? how could we practice patience with no-one to irritate us? And so when somebody annoys us, we try to think "Oh! They're being so kind because they're giving me this opportunity to train and this is leading me on this Path that I've chosen that I want to be on" so, as soon as I would just have to laugh at myself both at what I was getting annoyed at but also seeing that my Spiritual Guide's hand was in this, either creating this situation for my benefit or seeing this annoying person even as a Buddha. And it was somebody that I know from other festivals and get along really well and I see him now and I feel fondly toward him...I don't know if you want to hear details?

I: Yeah, sure, go ahead...

P5: Because I've...when I talk to other people...for your research it might be useful to have a bit more detail but...when...when I've described this to some close friends or my Teacher about what was going...well, I told my Teacher the details but other people I was trying not to say what I was annoyed by because I found myself having...wanting to justify it by saying "This really was annoying, this wasn't some trivial thing, it was really annoying!" and particularly in the context of Tharpaland because it's...I...it's...I think you need your Teacher's permission to do even a short group retreat there and when I had heard about it was from, mostly from a person who did a fairly long retreat there, almost 3 years, and one of the other things they told us in the introduction was that if you need...you should very much try not to cough, try not to sneeze, and if you absolutely had to, that you should give people some kind of fore warning because if you make a sudden loud sound like that you can disturb their inner winds and it can make it very difficult for them to meditate. so I've heard, some people have said this was true of Venerable Tarchin but certainly of people almost of his caliber, that when their winds get disturbed like that, when they've been very very concentrated, that they can't meditate for months because of that interference..so anyway, with that in mind I

had this idea that there would be a certain standard of behavior and so I was sitting next to somebody who would sigh frequently and at irregular intervals during the meditation and at one meditation he took off his metal watch in the middle of the meditation, and was rattling it around and putting it on the table and...he...during the meditation he took out his notebook and started writing. Writing, writing, writing! And...and I kept thinking "wow, that's a..." I was floored?? actually that he had done those things. This sighing not so much but...because the sighing I think he may not even been aware of but the others things seemed like...you have to be aware that you're taking out your notebook and writing down your notes (she was funny, I laughed) and I...in some other contexts I wouldn't have been so surprised but because of this idea that I had of this particular retreat center, I...and off course I couldn't talk to him but my mind was saying "what are you doing?! What are you thinking?!" and...and then we would recite the root text at the beginning and every single...we would do it every session and every single time he would get 2 or 3 of the words wrong...and I...at first I thought "oh, he's doing it from memory and so that's why he's saying Samsara instead of karma" or something else like that... but I looked over and no, he was reading from the text (surprised) and after it happened for a few sessions I was wondering if I should be worried about him, if something was happening with his mind and..he would also rub his hands on his pants, like this motion (demonstrates) that would be a bit distracting and... when we recite the text together we are following the teacher and so it's like an omsey where you, you're following someone so you should be listening carefully, their pace and everything and this person had a loud voice so I could hear him more than I could hear the teacher that I was trying to follow, especially because this person was sitting right beside me. But also his pace would be completely off and so I also couldn't hear, couldn't concentrate on the words clearly, because they were...there was a kind of echo where the teacher was the echo (I laughed again). (She sighs) and, like I said, sometimes...sometimes it just seemed amusing and the I would try...I was happy because I persisted and I kept coming up with some angle, whether it was thinking about his kindness and how I needed to practice patience, or seeing him as a Buddha or seeing this situation as manifested by my spiritual guide to help me...seeing it in terms of emptiness and part of that was...I felt like "Oh, but this really is annoying unlike some things I or other people get annoyed at. This...anybody would say this situation is annoying!" and then I'd think "That's not true, that's just your own conclusion that you're coming to" and I don't really know what anybody else who was there was thinking but I was telling myself "No-one else is annoyed by this, it's just you" and...and so I had a lot of success trying to battle this delusion that came...it went from the beginning pretty much until the end but...and I would manage to pacify it for a while and then it would come back...and

I've never had a retreat, really, that had anything like that but my teacher said "Actually that sounds like a very good retreat "because, especially because I didn't give up, and just say "I'm annoyed, this is just, definitely an annoying situation and it's all his fault and all that"... and I kept trying to find these different angles and I did feel like "This is the real test of what I've been studying" (smiled and looked pleased) and...and I did have...I did feel that my concentration got better and that there's something very special about that place where a lot of people have meditated and so it has a certain kind of energy and..having other people there who are also very concentrated helps, helps provide this good environment for meditating and...and venerable Tarchin's whole presence is very quite and in fact he whispers his whole teaching, there's a microphone so you can hear him but...he has this very quiet, very loving presence, so I..despite this annoyance that kept coming up I did have I did have a fair amount of peace and I did feel like I gained a greater understanding of...of the text we were studying. And I loved his teachings and ...it was very pleasant being there, the conditions are very nice and it was...he encouraged us to go for walks between sessions and saying that it was really important to keep our winds moving or we would stagnate and then when we came back to session that our minds would be really dull and would tend toward sinking and we wouldn't be fresh and that was really good advice. He said "don't just meditate and read during the break, you need to go out and walk around" and some of the places on the grounds...there are these real "vistas" on clear days, and we got some clear days, that you can see out a few valleys away and my teacher had told me that that's also a way to take your winds out, to really look, to look at a view, that really takes your mind far away. So don't misunderstand, it was a completely wonderful experience. But I was and I tend to be a very quite person so it's not hard for me to be quite and to observe silence but I'm not...a lot of people said "Oh, I wish I could stay" or "I want to do a 3 year retreat, a solitary retreat" and.. someday I hope to do that because that's...it would be, especially as Geshe-la was saying today, once you've got to a certain point you need to do that to complete the path, but I missed being able to laugh out loud and you...it helped that there were these shared conventions and it was understood that it was out of kindness that we weren't making noise or disturbing anybody else, so whatever good it was doing us to be silent, a lot of it was also consideration for others and even trying to be quite when you're moving around and..you do become aware of a lot of other noises that you make, even setting the table or putting down your glass of water...unzipping your luggage, all of the sudden those kinds of noises sound much louder and, OK there's nothing I can do about these.

I: So, do you think you enjoyed yourself a lot not just going for walks and because of the peaceful environment but also because of the way you were able to deal with this mind of annoyance that kept coming up?

P5: Oh! as much as I regret it was there but...yeah...I also, I arrived a day earlier so that I could start to get over my jet lag and...and got to know some of the people on the staff there. And then I had 2 quite days after the retreat was over when most of the people from the group retreat came to Manjushri for the ordination ceremony and they stayed and there were just a handful of us who stayed at Tharpaland and the residents and the teacher came down for a day but then they came back. And for me it was really good to be able to be in that quite environment but to talk to other people about Dharma and the people on the staff there, like the Admin and the EPC and the retreat co-ordinator but also the Ghompa co-ordinator and the cook, they're very wonderful people and they have a lot of experience and so they've seen a lot of different things happening with very serious meditators, so it was really good to learn what kinds of things came up for people and..and also to see them serving people that...I was much more impressed with that than...with the people who I didn't have much interaction with because they were on solitary retreat but..but the retreat coordinator is, she's the, kind of the arms and legs and interface with the worlds for the retreaters, so if they need anything, she gets it for them if it's something appropriate and...anyway, listen to her talk about the wisdom that that requires was...was really illuminating. But...and there were some other solitary retreaters who'd been there for various lengths of time who were coming out of retreat so that they could come to the festival and they needed that transition time and so, Venerable Samten also participated in the retreat with us. And so here he is, this resident teacher of one of the biggest centres in England and he was sitting at venerable Tarchin's feet and being very humble like any other student there and then eating meals with us and after the retreat was over and we'd stopped observing silence, to be able to ask him questions and the same with...to that degree with Gen Sangye. So he didn't participate in the group retreat but he started coming to meals towards the end and he was a resident teacher in a major centre in the US for 11 years and he was there to ask questions of and to talk to. So that was another, yes, an extra I wasn't expecting.

I: And how was it for you coming out of silence?

P5: Hu, it was like I said, it was a relief because...Oh, I think I started to say that and I got sidetracked but...even-though we had this shared convention that we weren't going to

interact with each other in all these ways, it still felt a little bit unfriendly and talking with people is a way...it's one of the main ways we show that we're being friendly, especially with people you don't know and so even-though we all knew why we were being silent sometimes it felt to me that I was being unfriendly to people and I wanted to at least wave or gesture at them or something like that. And...so I was happy when the silence was over (laughter) and we could do these things again. And also I hadn't expected that, I thought that it was just going to be very easy because I don't tend to be a big talker and so...compared to people who are very outgoing, very eloquacious, who I've heard say they struggle having to keep with silence. In general not talking was OK. Something else I noticed about being silent was that aside from that whole noise angle, that the discipline of it it's...it's really good training and so I found that it was a slight impulse to want to, not so much talk, but communicate with other people and saying "No, that's not appropriate" and then just "No, I don't do that" and then going the other way was a similar kind of process to dealing with some delusions or something arises that you want to do something and your wisdom tells you "No, that's really not a good idea" either "it's just never a good idea" (laughter) or "it's not a good idea in this particular situation", "it's not appropriate" and so you stop yourself and so that thoughts of restraint it's...is...I hadn't thought about that at all before but it's like the same muscle being trained.

I: So do you think that experience on retreat will help you also in your daily life?

Working with that muscle like you said?

P5: Yeah, well I think that's part of the reason that I had this experience on retreat, is that in my daily life I...my biggest delusion is more of a kind of laziness and I have trouble with it partly because there's a very physical kind of medical aspect to it, so I know that I need to rest but I also like to rest so I always have to figure out which it is, but off course everything has levels to it. But on this grosser level like the annoyance was at it's very easy to recognize and much more disturbing to my mind and my... my daily life tends to be pretty peaceful, especially at the moment I...I have to spend a fair amount of time at home with my dog because he's getting old and he's...he gets very anxious when we leave him alone and... and then at the Dharma Centre where it's very pleasant and so I don't, I don't have a lot of really difficult situations that often.

I: that's unusual, somehow...

P5: I know (laughter). Yes, so we've been taught that you can ask Dorje Shugden to provide more difficulty for you...

I: Huhu...

P5: But our teacher said you have to be a little bit careful because if you ask for it, you'll get it at some point and...it may be enough to say, if you really rely on Dorje Shugden, that the conditions he's providing you are just what you need and so I think...I think sometimes I must be a really weak practitioner because it seems...it doesn't seem like he's providing me with that many challenges but you can also say that that's my particular karma.

I: At the moment...

P5: At the moment. Exactly, yeah.

I: It seems like you did have challenges in your retreat...

P5: Yeah, yeah. Mainly that...that...that...one person that I have the karma, I have close karma with him already because, because we had seen each other at different festivals and kind of connected and...but also the happen to be sitting next to me, because probably if I had been sitting further away from him I wouldn't have noticed these things...Oh! I should tell you one other thing which was...so I was sitting...I was telling myself "you're the only one who's annoyed by this and in fact this is not even annoying" but toward the end several of us were eating a meal together and he said that he had gotten in trouble in his last retreat at Tharpaland because someone had complained about him because he was doing this and this and this..(smiles) and it was many of the things that he had been doing this time and I thought "wow, it never occurred to me to complain to somebody", I would...I can't imagine doing that...I saw this as, this is situation the that I am supposed to deal with..and there was a period when I thought; sometimes you can try to decide if...is there something I should be telling this person? Because if somebody is a fairly advanced practitioner it can be a kindness to help them pointing out their flaws but you have to do it with a really pure motivation... but I was glad well, he had already got this feedback so...he still wasn't aware that he was doing some of those things but it also made me laugh to find out that...that he had done it before and that somebody else had complained about him and...so somebody had to talk to him and...

I: how did you think...what did you think then about the way you reacted to it?

P5: I felt a little bit better about it because there were two of us (laughter) who found him annoying. But I also...one of the other thoughts that kept arising was “but this really is annoying” and then I realized that I...I tend to...a lot of us tend to do this, that you...you do this, it's almost a kind of math like equation, that you say “maybe this one thing just...maybe just the heavy sighing alone wouldn't add up to anything. But when you put this and this and this and this, then that's a definitely...annoying.” That the only, as some kind of formula, and that the only conclusion you come at is: annoyance; annoying person. and that's completely the opposite of what we're taught, which is that it comes from your mind and so you can add things up and what you would like it to add up to? You can make it be anything! And you can choose, you can choose what's most beneficial. And it's the complete opposite of it being fixed, like this is a 1 and this is a 3 and it adds up to very annoying or...and I know that I do the...that a lot of humans have that tendency to look for this kind of evidence and say “it's this”, especially with the difficult situations like you've lost your job and you have bad health and well that definitely equals suffering or pain or unhappiness, actually, is what we think it adds up to and...and it's not the case, we can make it add up to whatever we want..

I: So do you think that you more aware of that during the retreat?

P5: In a small way, it wasn't one of the main things I was working on but it's one of those things that gradually over time, little bits here and there, help chip away the original way of thinking “Yeah, conclusion: this” , rather that decide, decide what you want to do with this, do you want to try and learn something from the situation or do you just want to blame somebody? If you just want to blame somebody what good does that do to anybody?

I: OK...

P5: Yeah..

I: I think we're coming to the end of it. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

P5: (laughter) It's funny because I say I'm a quite person and in here...(laughter) I went on and on and on! Ah, let me think...well I think, I think for that particular retreat that was my

experience.

I: Lovely, thank you so much.

P5: You're welcome.

Participante 6:

I: So, could you describe for me the experience of being on that Lamrim meditation retreat up at Tharpaland?

P6: Yeah. I mean, the thing I remember is that I really enjoyed being on a quite short retreat because I had been on the long retreat, the Vajrayogini retreat before and I found it quite difficult to be honest. I had many problems, many things coming up and I really enjoyed knowing that I was there only for one week and it kind of gave the space in my mind to really relax and just try and follow Venerable Tarchin's instructions. So I felt like, from the beginning, I felt quite relaxed and quite light and that always helps, I find, to...to be in a retreat because, I mean the main thing I find helpful in a retreat is, you have like the outer conditions to help you concentrate on your mind and to really let everything settle down and really, you know, like really, all the distractions that you normally follow can just drop away and you can just tune in to what, well, Buddha finally says, so...at that time I remember I found it very easy to just follow the instructions and to just let myself be guided and...I always feel it depends very much on how smooth your mind is, how much you are open, how much you just, you know, have no objections; you just kind of go into it, plunge into it and see what comes. And I remember I felt that very easy and it's not always like, that's every retreat is different but...yeah, I remember I felt quite light, quite nice...

I: So you would have retreats where you'd have sort of a different experience in contrast to this one.

P6: Oh yeah (laughter) yeah, yeah! Very different experience. I mean, especially that one retreat I did, the Vajrayogini retreat and...I just had had my first Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment, October, and I went into retreat I think it was December. So quite soon after I

had the empowerment. And I didn't really know what I was doing, I didn't really know the Sadhana, I'd done it like twice or 3 times before...I don't even know why I went to that retreat to be honest (laughter). Just thought "it's a good idea to go there and I love venerable Tarchin and I love Tharpaland, so..."and, and I thought, you know, that's a good way of getting familiarity but...I was there and just, I mean just my usual pattern of being, just became so obvious! I think that was, that is what retreats normally do, they just let all your patterns become so obvious; I mean we call it delusions. And it's just much more easy to, well perhaps not at the beginning, to see! Just to...you're just inside your delusions so much more, just...well because the distraction are far away, you can't run away and you can't pretend there's something outside of you happening but it's just obvious that is just your mind going wild and..

I: so you were aware of your mental patterns manifesting?

P6: Hum?

I: So you're very aware of your mental...

P6: well, I wasn't really, I mean, I was...it was just painful at the beginning...Oh well, not in the beginning but it started pretty soon to become very very painful and..I mean my main pattern was mainly, I don't know, just pushing and then thinking "I have to do this correctly" or... I don't know, it's very difficult to describe, you know, what's going on in your mind but I was just very very tired and very anxious and...I don't know, I mean, perhaps also it manifests in so many different ways like for example I didn't know what to do in the practice, I was very tight because I didn't have a clue really and, I mean, some people would just relax and say "Oh well, this is boring, I'll just go along or fall asleep or.." whatever and I was just, you know, tight to do it well, which you know, is probably just the worst thing you can do because it's this kind of school mentality where you try to have results and you try to accomplish something and...I mean I had been through tough times the years before and things like that and my relationship had ended and whatever but...I think the main pattern was just not being able to relax and to just, you know, see what happens and to just be there, be happy and not have any expectation whatsoever and I couldn't manage to do that so, the whole experience of being on retreat was just quite painful, I just wasn't used to...I mean, in the beginning I remember that I was even...like I couldn't understand that so many things were coming up in my mind, like just memories, very unimportant things like places I

had been to and, you know, whatever...and it was just like, I didn't understand why that was, you know, in my mind because I was supposed to be doing a retreat on Vajrayogini (laughter). I was sitting thinking about I don't know what and... And then I got lung and then...and...which was quite a painful experience and as I didn't know what it was I freaked out even more and I tried to do something about it and I tried to understand why it was happening and what I could do better to make it not happen and I was just...you know too much in my head, just thinking all the time and...Yeah, it was quite a difficult time, so...

I: So this time you could just relax and do all that you're saying that you couldn't do in that previous one?

P6: Yeah! Probably, yeah. Because, I mean, I saw...I mean, I never had the feeling that retreat was the problem, you know, I never had a negative mind toward retreat. And somebody had told me, you know, that well sometimes long retreats are difficult and then, you know, you enjoy in short retreats. So I had some hope (laughter) and I wanted to try again and I had that determination not to put any pressure on myself, you know? So I really went there and just thought "OK, I'm doing a special holiday and I want to feel good and I want to relax and I want to enjoy". And you now I just went for walks and every...between all the sessions and it was beautiful I mean, I just...I had worked very hard before in the centre and stuff so...I was so happy to be out in the nature and I walked all the paths up and down, you know? And I was...I mean; it was different from the other retreat because there were no boundaries, you now? We could walk wherever we wanted, we could, you now, do whatever we want, and we could miss any session we wanted. And once you have that freedom in your mind, you know, you know? "I'm totally free to do whatever I want" and that gives you so much space to know "I do this because I want it" and then there's no pressure, you know? All the pressure falls away because you just enjoy and I mean, that's a joy, what greater joy could there be than listening to venerable Tarchin's voice and being inspired by him? Than having it so easy to generate, you know, good minds, when at home you sit there and try, try, try, nothing happening, you know? And there, you know, you just try to be influenced by all those people and be encouraged by others doing the same thing, you know...

I: So this time you were much more certain of why you were on retreat.

P6: Yeah. Although I think, yeah! I mean, it's always a personal decision isn't it, I mean, why you are on retreat. There's not "a" reason to be on retreat, I think and depending on what

your strongest delusion is, you know, then retreat can fulfill all kinds of different things probably, I mean, yeah, OK, in the end it's all about finding inner peace but...for me, my main pattern, you know, obstructing or whatever, being the main obstruction for my practice, would be pushing. So for me the main reason to go to a retreat would be not to try to be a "goody, goody" you know, not trying to...whatever...fulfill everything, just trying to have a good time and realizing the best way to have a good time is to practice Lamrim, that's what Geshe-la said during spring festival, didn't he? He says you know "enjoy your life practicing Lamrim" or something (laughter).

I: Can you tell me more about practicing Lamrim then?

P6: Yeah. First of all my Lamrim practice, my formal practice, is not good at all, like...I mean, I try to bear in mind that Lamrim is like the foundation for my whole practice and I think I kind of have a feeling that the most important thing, like Geshe-la says, is to you know cherish others and to, as he said today, to do that with wisdom and compassion and I think I really, really believe that, you know? But for me often formal practice is quite...quite difficult. Like I find it quite difficult to sit down, to discipline myself and so forth. But I find that Geshe-la is very encouraging, to say you know, you can practice any time and it's very important that we keep that in mind, that we can generate positive minds towards our self, towards other people, then all the time no matter what we do. So for me the main meaning of Lamrim is a method to improve myself, a method to become a purer person, a method to become...yeah, a happy person, to find inner peace and I understand that, you know, those 21 meditations that we get from Geshe-la or from Je Tsongkhapa, they're the supreme method, you know, to accomplish that. If I would, you know, if I would practice them on a daily basis then I know, if I have, you know, a meditation object in my mind, you know, like cherishing others or patience, it's the best protection from all suffering and I'm totally confident that this is the truth. But I always wonder why I don't do this! (laughter) but I mean, Geshe-la gives us all the answers so, you know, the answer is just not enough familiarity, you know? Just too many distractions, not enough motivation or clear understanding of the advantages of Lamrim and so forth. But still sometimes I wonder, you know, I seem to understand something and I wonder "why am I not putting it into practice more than I am?" but again, I think he's so patient with us and I think we have to be very patient with us too, you know, by not putting any pressure but just understanding "OK, I can only try the best now and that's all I can do, just try to do now what I can, try to learn to be good, try to understand things don't exist although they appear to exist" and, yeah, just improving like that, every day every day,

trying, trying...and I feel that although, you know, I have many obstacles and whatever but I feel that I'm never really separate from Lamrim, like once you hear it, once you're confident that it's true, you're never really separate because you know deep in your heart, you know it's true and...So, I feel it. I feel it's... I feel it's true that it's like the basic foundation of what we have to do and nothing else will ever work without Lamrim. Because it's so true, without loving other people how can we ever be happy? It's just obvious anyway...yeah, I think...

I: and what's it like when you're training those meditations in your retreat away from distractions?

P6: I think it's just an opportunity to deepen your experience because, I think mostly because you make a strong determination that "that is what I'm going to do" I think if I would be able to make that strong determination in my daily life, you know, just one day, say "OK, today I'm thinking about emptiness all the time" then perhaps I could almost have an experience like in a retreat. But the thing is, somehow we are not able to make a strong determination everyday, so a retreat almost gives you the opportunity to make the strong determination, OK because you saying "I take a special time out" and that helps you to make a strong determination to do something different from what you're normally doing. And what I'm normally doing is following my distractions. So the thing I do differently is not follow my distractions as best as I can and, well, I mean, all the conditions in a retreat centre like Tharpaland or any other case and retreat centre just help you to develop those minds, you know? And for example being silent is just so helpful because talking, you know, you can't talk without gross conceptual minds probably (laughter) before you're a Buddha! (laughter) then perhaps it's possible, I don't know but before that, you know, talking alone invites gross conceptual thoughts or the other way around, I don't know, I'm not sure...but silence just helps you to shut down all those minds, you know, that just make you suffer all day long. Because, I mean, most of the thoughts we have are not positive, they don't lead us in the right direction, they're not thoughts of, you know, loving-kindness, wisdom, but they're just thoughts about, you know, what do we have to do, what we should have done, what we're doing tomorrow, what...you know? What we're going to eat, whatever...and then those thoughts normally make us not peaceful, but...you know? Either excited or anxious or...and the...the silence just helps to shut down a bit, to let go, just enjoy your own mind. and once you come into that rhythm you have one session, you gain a little bit of experience, come out of the session, you try to keep silent...Oh well... you keep silent but you try to be mindful of your object of meditation and then it's really like it's building on to that. And you come back to

the meditation and your mind is already smoother and it's more able to find the object of meditation and your experience of those states of mind that are just peaceful are much more deeper and easier to gain...

so I think that's the main point of retreat, that...you just longer time to go deeper in inner peace and then...a stronger determination to keep that inner peace, that, you know...

I: I wonder, those distractions you're mentioning, if they come up in retreat what do you do with them?

P6: I mean, depends. There's many many different methods to deal with distraction. I found one of the most powerful methods is, like venerable Tarchin said at the beginning of the retreat that distractions are our main enemy because they're the opposite to peace...to peace of mind, opposite to concentration, to meditation. And understanding that everything that comes up in my mind that is not, you know, my object of meditation is a distraction, just you know? Just clearly seeing that no matter how interesting, how important it seems to be, to just recognize it as my worst enemy and then just forget, you know? Just decide "I'm not interested. That's not what I'm doing at the moment" you know? "I can think about it later, not now" and it's coming back to the determination, isn't it? Because the stronger your determination not to follow your distractions, the easier you recognize them, the easier it is for you not to be interested in following them. And for me, I mean, it helps to know that I'm following my distractions 24/7 anyway and I can just tell myself "OK, now 1 hour I'm not! It's not very much." just to know that for a little short while I'm doing something different and then be happy with that and just know...I mean, for me also knowing that I'm doing it for others, even in that case, you know? I mean Buddha says, you know "Bodhichitta is the strongest mind you can ever have" and sometimes in meditation I really, you know, get a little experience of why that is the case because sometimes when you feel, you know, "I don't want to be distracted" it has some power, but if you think "OK, if I really ever want to help anybody I have to gain some experience" you know? "I have to gain some experience of inner peace and if I want to gain some experience I have to stop my distractions" and then it can be much more powerful because, you know, OK, all those people, if I ever want to help them, I'm not listening to my distractions now in order to sometime in the future be helpful, be of help to others. And then sometimes it helps, it can be much more powerful, yeah. And also, I mean, for me, always in school, you know, even when I was in school and so forth, I always had a wish not to waste my time, like sitting at school I thought "OK, I can do whatever but, you know, OK if I'm here I might as well, you know, do something meaningful". I mean sometimes it was like listening to the teaching and participating, sometimes it was like "OK,

I'll just do something else" (laughter) but you know, whatever it is, just, you know, I never really wanted to be there and just waste my time, you know? Either I would not go there or, you know, do something but...I just, yeah, I just never wanted to waste my time and I think in retreat it's much easier to...to have that feeling of how precious the opportunity is because I know how bad my concentration normally is, you know? I know how many difficulties I have to motivate myself to meditate and whatever. And when I'm in retreat I really think "OK, now I have to make the best out of it" and because it's not very often that I'm in retreat then it's easier, you know? It's just easier than on a daily basis, I find. I mean I could say that for me it's the daily basis (laughter) but, yeah it's easier in retreat yeah...

I: So is it very different, your experience with your meditation when you're in retreat or in your daily life?

P6: Yeah, I mean you can have very good experiences in your daily life but...I mean for me the main difference is also when it is guided or not and...I don't have much experience with not, you know, non-guided retreats. So, I think for me, you know, doing a retreat that is not guided would be quite difficult too and most of my sessions in my daily life are not guided, like I go to TTP now and, you know, we have guided meditations there and I can gain some experience too but...a guided retreat it's just special because it's so...yeah, because it makes...you make a special thing out of it, I mean in the end it always comes back to your own mind, doesn't it? It's just because we make retreat special that it is special for us. If we wouldn't think of anything special then it wouldn't be special. I could probably say "OK, TTP is very special and I gain deep experiences" but sometimes you develop ordinary views and then it just doesn't, yeah, just isn't special anymore. I mean, I remember at the beginning when I was for the first time on TTP, it was very very special, you know? I really try to see my teacher as a holy being who can give me, you know, supreme medicine and I received so many blessings, you know? And after a while it just... (Laughter) ordinary view comes back and "oh...time for TTP..." (Like it's boring) and I kind of drag myself into the Ghompa and... and then still the blessings come through and it's easier and, you know, and then your mind changes, you know, hopefully...but, that's for retreat because you've made such an effort to get there, you paid the money, you take your time out, you already have a mind that is very positive towards it, you know? You wouldn't make such an effort if you wouldn't want to do it. So I think that's the main thing if you want to do it and if you have a positive mind towards something then we gain good experiences.

I: So it gives you sort of... applying so much effort to go there, taking time out, you're much more... to make the most of it.

P6: Yeah. I think at the end it's not just the effort but your effort is just, you know, a...just shows your determination, doesn't it? It's just like, almost like, I don't know out you say in English but...like incorporation or something, a manifestation of your effort...

I: like an embodiment?

P6: Yeah. Something like that. It's like if I have a strong motivation to go somewhere to receive teachings I'll do anything for it. If I don't have it, nothing. And if I have a strong motivation it helps me to not waste my time because it would be...you know, nobody really wants to do something that is totally uninterested in what they're doing. Either you want to do it and then you're interested or you don't want to do it. And that's what I see in so many people, you know? When we generate a strong wish, you know, and then a strong intention, then experiences will come because we are so, we are open and we want it. Something, I mean, you still have that trap you fall into that you hold on to results, you know? But apart from that I think...Geshe-la always says, you know, intention is the first thing. Practicing Dharma means having the intention to practice Dharma So without a strong intention nothing, nothing coming.

I: And retreat does make it easier to remember that intention?

P6: I think so, I think so. Because, just because it's something special, just because it's not everyday life, I think, you know? If you would be in retreat forever, you know, for a long time probably we would make it ordinary at one point, you know? Or if you know, this festival would go on for weeks and weeks and weeks, we would probably be tired, we would, you know, we would wish to go home and just lie down and just have a rest and whatever. And that's just because our merit runs out, because positive karma to view something in a special manner is not there anymore and...So I think the most important thing is to always renew your intention because it doesn't just keep?? Up by itself, you know? I feel like always working on your intention is one of the most important things, always working on your wish to improve yourself, to gain experiences, to receive blessings, you now? To improve your understanding of Lamrim you know? Whatever it is, just to stay with it.

I: And do you think that because the Lamrim retreat was just a week it was easier to

do...rather than if it lasted...

P6: I think so, because somehow it's almost like you know it's a week and OK I was, I knew my main trap, kind of, you know, pushing and wanting results. I don't whether that's wanting results but something like, yeah, doing things correctly or whatever, something like that. And then I knew that for a week, you know, it's not something big, you know? It's something small and you can kind of try to stay relaxed for a week and to...don't have, you know, really high expectations but something you know, life changing or happening or whatever. You just go and enjoy and...You know?

I: So, what is it exactly that you enjoy while you're on retreat?

P6: I think mostly (pause) just becoming more relaxed and more happy because what makes us unhappy are our negative thoughts, so meditating on Lamrim reduces our negative thoughts that make us unhappy and...It's just more space for inner freedom and inner peace and it really, in retreat; it really becomes very obvious that there's no problem outside the mind. I mean, that was mostly when I was in long retreat that I really felt that I kind of, for the first time it clicked, that this was really true that there's no problem outside my mind because when you're on a retreat and you know OK, all the conditions are perfect, you know? You get your meals 3 times a day, you know, you sleep and everything is fine, whatever. There's no problem whatsoever, you know? Nothing! But still sometimes you're very, very unhappy. It's just obvious that it's not coming from the outside! It's just...you can't deny it! As much as you want...it's just obvious. So, I had this, you know kind of negative experience in the long retreat and then in the short retreat I just had positive experiences, you know? Realizing that "OK also, you know, happiness is coming from inside. OK, It's both, happiness and unhappiness." And it just depends what karma is ripening. In the short retreat it's just, you know positive experiences were ripening and...I mean, being silent helps a lot to experience more happiness and more inner peace. But I think it's mainly that, mainly just an experience of inner joy, of happiness, of... You know? Relaxing, chilling out...

I: And how would the silence sort of help with that experience of happiness?

P6: I think it's because you allow yourself...I mean one of the main things, for me, producing problems is communicating with others. (laughter) No but I think just being or living with others, so many delusions come up because you always think about "What does this person

think about me?; “What do I have to do to please them?” ; “Why are they angry with me?” ; “Why do they hate me now?”; “What do I have to do now?” And it's you know, it's a constant analyzing going on in your mind when you...when you're concerned with others, you know? In a way of...because, I think because we don't love others sincerely at the moment. And we always think they exist inherently and we always have to find out who they are, you know? Whether they're really nice or bad, whether, you know, they can help me fulfill my wishes or not. And you're always trying to scan the situation, you're always trying to analyze it, to, you know, make the best out of it, to understand everything, to make other people love you, whatever, you're always trying to manipulate all...even if it's on a very subtle level and you think you are actually trying to love others and you think you're cherishing others but there's still so much thinking and analyzing going on. And once you...once you know “I don't have to communicate with others” you know, “I don't even have to look at them! I don't even have to acknowledge that they are there.” you know? This whole thing just drops away, you just be totally in your own space and...It's almost like you can stay with whatever experience you have made, without having to go out of it in order to...yeah...get into contact with other people. It's almost like giving you the space to remain inside and, you know, and experience deeper or kind of understanding deeper what you have experienced and staying with it. I mean, the main thing of meditation is mindfulness, isn't it? Is to keep in mind that which helps you to be peaceful and just staying where it is peaceful basically and normally we don't stay there. We make a little experience but we go out again and we loose it and...yeah, one thing that really helps is silence because if you don't have to communicate there's no reason why you have to leave that sphere of inner peace and I mean, I think the more we get familiar with Lamrim thoughts, the more we can stay in that inner peace and then communicate. But, you know, like on my level I find it almost impossible to kind of stay in that peace and at the same time communicate. So for me being given like the freedom not to communicate, you know? Which is very rare, I mean when can you ever, you know? Be in a place where it tolerated not to communicate? No, really and where people wouldn't be offended, would understand what it means, you know why you wouldn't communicate and it is no offense to not communicate? I think that's just...being given that freedom allows you to stay within that sphere of inner peace and...

I: So from what you are saying ideally you would be able to do the same as you do on retreat while you're interacting and communicating with others in your daily life?

P6: Yeah, yeah. I mean that's what we are aiming at. That Lamrim thoughts become so

natural that they just pervade our mind and everything we say and do comes out of that thought so there's no contradiction whatsoever. I mean that's where we are aiming at but I think, you know, Geshe-la and everybody else, they know it's training so in order to get there first of all we need to protect that experience, you know? It's like , you know...it's like, you know, a little plant, you now, you have to kind of protect it because if, you know, you just let everybody walk over it, you know, it's...it doesn't, doesn't grow, you know? It's just that's...it will be dead soon but if you put a fence around it and let it grow for a while then after a while when it is a strong tree then you can take the fence away and nobody, you know, can walk over it and trample it down, but that's what we are heading towards. It's just familiarizing our mind with inner peace so that whatever we do, whatever we say it's just coming out of that inner peace, it's just an expression of our love, of our compassion, of our wisdom and nothing else, yeah...And then I think, even then I think that everything you say even improves our wisdom and compassion, you know? It's almost like when we act out of a specific intention then that intention is reinforced but...and before that intention is strong, you know, it might easily happen that we create or that we...how do you say?.. We develop an intention during meditation but then we immediately loose it after meditation and then everything we do and say comes out of a different intention, like a negative intention or just mindlessness, whatever. And then it reinforces, you know, almost our distractions and meaningless thoughts and whatever. So at the beginning it just seems like retreat is a, is a good way of protecting our practice and Geshe-la always gives us the advice to do both, you know? To have a normal life, do, you now, our daily activities as usual and just do a daily Lamrim practice everyday and then once in a while, he says, go on retreat to improve your experience. And I think it's a wonderful method to...to make progress in a very natural way because we learn both. We learn how to integrate Lamrim into our daily lives and we learn how to deepen our experience in retreat. So, very very skillful method, yeah. But for example, for me at the moment, I feel like my...the place where I'm at, the most important thing is to work for my centre because, you know, I had this experience in a long retreat and it was a very valuable experience, you know? Although, you know, it wasn't a pleasurable experience but it was very valuable but still I think at the moment for me the most important thing is to be out of retreat, working, and you know, just accumulating merit, purifying negativity which, you know, it's just words but the meaning is, you know, coping in your daily life by applying Lamrim, you know? And working for your centre you have so many opportunities, you know? People yelling at you (laughter)

I: true.

P6: People you know, whatever, hating you, people not talking to you or people telling you what to do and not to do and whatever, you know? Just so many opportunities to practice Lamrim and I think, you know, when we go through all this trying to improve every day, every day, every day, trying to not give up cherishing others, trying to not run away from our problems, trying to not run away from our centre, you know? Trying to deepen our reliance on our teacher, trying to deepen our pure view, our wisdom, whatever...then I think we create such good conditions to go on retreat someday, you know? And then it will all fall together, I'm sure, you know? If you go through all this training I think retreat will become so easy, so easy. Because so many opportunities in daily life to purify, to just gain a deep experience of Lamrim and then you sit down and everything is easy, I'm really definite. But I know it's a long way, you know? It's just working through all this stuff we have in our mind but that's OK, I'm definite, you know? That we have the best methods and the best conditions, yeah.

I: Sounds perfect!

P6: Yeah! Well you don't realize while you are in it. While you are in it, you know, you just think everything is horrible and I just want to give up and it doesn't make any sense but sometimes especially here you have some wisdom and you recognize "no, it makes sense" and it's normal to have horrible feelings and, you know, to just doubt everything, you realize "OK, that's part of my, of my way of learning" and at the same time you reconnect and you see everybody is the same, everybody has the same problems, everybody has the same experiences and you, know, it's just learning and learning, learning, learning...and improving slowly, yeah.

I: That's great. I think we are sort of running out of time. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish?

P6: Not really, I think...yeah.

I: Thank you so much.

P6: My pleasure.

ANEXO F

Apresentação Completa dos Dados deste Estudo
 Reflectindo os Primeiros Três Passos do Método
 Fenomenológico aplicado à Psicologia

Participante 1

Meaning Units	Psychological Meaning
<p>I: Thank you so much for accepting to talk to me and...I wonder if you can tell me, try to describe the experience of being on this retreat, the...</p> <p>P1: It's actually...The experience of being on retreat for me it's absolutely wonderful because I love retreat.</p>	<p>P1 experiences positive feelings on retreat.</p>
<p>I find I progress, you know? Quite quickly and the meditations are very deep</p>	<p>P1 perceives her level of mastery in meditation improving at quick pace while on retreat, going into deeper levels of awareness and concentration.</p>
<p>but also at the same time a lot of, I call them "gremlins", you know? Delusions and self-grasping, come up very very strongly for me</p>	<p>P1 experiences with great awareness and increased intensity her own disfunctional cognitions and consequent negative emotional responses . For P1 although they appear to be harmless they are on the contrary quite negative and harmful. In particular P1 mentions the cognition that phenomena exist independently of perception and parts.</p>
<p>and I think that they're easier to see on retreat because you don't have a lot of distractions of daily life. Because your mind is so concentrated and you are very subtle and very deep, so therefore I find it quite...Well it's easier...</p>	<p>For P1 it is easier to become aware of and identify disfunctional cognitions and consequente negative emotional responses within her own consciousness while on retreat (in contrast to her experience in daily life). On retreat there is a lack of external activities that usually function to distract her from her own internal processes. Due to this she is able to experience higher levels of concentration, being able to access different</p>

<p>I think it's possibly everybody's experience, I'm not sure...</p> <p>But it's easier to see your delusions and...And actually identify your delusions; which delusions are coming up...</p> <p>and sometimes they come up very very strong and it's very difficult to let them go because you grasp so strongly and...</p> <p>Yeah, I did find that in this retreat...To begin with it was really blissful. It was wonderful to be in retreat, you know? And doing the preliminaries, Mahamudra preliminaries, which was... That was great but then the delusions strongly started to appear, quite strongly...</p> <p>So, I was able to eventually deal with them by putting myself in Dorje Shugden's Mandala and I was able to control them more and then my mind became more peaceful and I was able to concentrate on the meditations and concentrate on the practice, the Mahamudra practice of ...So, yeah it was a...</p> <p>I: And what about this last one, the Lamrim retreat?</p>	<p>and subtler levels of her own consciousness.</p> <p>P1 speculates that all retreaters must experience greater awareness of their consciousness as well as improved levels of concentration.</p> <p>P1 has less difficulty in monitoring and identifying her own dysfunctional cognitions and consequent negative emotional responses in comparison to daily life.</p> <p>P1 at times experiences dysfunctional cognitions and consequent negative emotions with great intensity and has difficulty disengaging from them and directing her attention elsewhere. For P1 the difficulty lies in a strong belief that the perceptions themselves are true and that phenomena exist inherently in the way they are experienced according to her perception at that time.</p> <p>In P1's latest experience of long retreat she started off experiencing extremely positive emotions. However from a certain point onwards there was a shift in P1's experience and she started experiencing dysfunctional cognitions that lead her to experience extremely negative emotions with great intensity, all of this was experienced with mental suffering.</p> <p>P1 found a strategy to cope with the unpleasantness of her experience. P1's strategy was to visualize herself in safe place where suffering and its causes did not exist and bring this into her experience of being at all times. This visualization was based on faith in a Buddhist Deity who embodies the quality of spiritual power and whose function is to protect spiritual practitioners. P1 would visualize herself in this deity's universe and feel safe and protected. P1's experience shifted. This allowed her to progressively gain more control over her internal processes and bring her focus of attention to the meditation objects rather than her dysfunctional cognitions and negative emotions.</p> <p>*On the Lamrim retreat P1 experienced positive emotions. P1 is familiar with the</p>
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P1: The Lamrim, the one before this Mahamudra? Oh, this short one? That was wonderful!...As you know I did that last year with you at Tharpaland. It was just before I got ordained.

It was absolutely wonderful. It's the most beautiful retreat. It really is. I think, you know? A very joyful mind, happy, happy mind, joyful. It was really great.

I'm not saying, you know? Delusions haunt us all the time; they come up all the time as you know... (Laughter)

Yeah, that...That's always a lovely, blissful retreat, you know? That's such a beautiful retreat and The Three Principal Aspects is such a lovely practice, I mean, the meditation we had this morning...

I: How was the practice during the retreat? The Three Principal Aspects of The Path?
P1: Ah! Wonderful...Because we just went through, as we're going through now with Geshe-la in the meditations...

Yeah, I just find that retreat so blissful you know? I find the meditations it's, it's not like the Snows Retreat. OK delusions do come out but they're not so strong. And The Three Principal Aspects, it's a short retreat, you know? It's only a week and it's a short retreat...

Yeah, I...I'm just trying to think, you know? Because the Snows Retreat it's quite, quite close to...I think a lot of what happened in the Snows Retreat, you know?...

retreat theme and the retreat centre. P1 acknowledges the presence of the researcher as having taking part in her past experience. For P1 this happened just previously to her ordination as a Buddhist Nun.

P1 experienced extremely positive emotions and feelings of happiness and joy during the short retreat.

For P1 although the whole of the experience was held as positive she nevertheless experienced having perceptions under dysfunctional cognitions that lead to negative emotions and this disturbed her peace of mind. P1 perceives these dysfunctional cognitions and the consequent negative emotions to be a part of the experience of being of "humans" in general and to be present at all times.

P1 feels positively about the retreat theme also due to having had positive previous experiences engaging in it. Part of this positiveness is the perceived meaning the theme of retreat has for P1.

*P1's experience of the Buddhist practice during the retreat was positive. P1 acknowledges the role of the retreat master being similar in function to the role of the main spiritual guide of the tradition. The spiritual guide's function is to guide students along an internal path. This is done partly by explaining in detail the meditations they will engage in, their function, purpose and method.

For P1 there is some contrast in her experience of the short retreat and the long winter retreat. In both P1 experienced having dysfunctional cognitions and consequent negative emotions but the intensity of these was much less reduced in the short retreat.

P1's memories of this short retreat are mixed and merged with the memories of the long retreat since there was less than a month break between the two.

And I just see the last retreat as the...A very blissful, peaceful retreat. A wonderful retreat with lovely teachings and meditations you know?

And I think following on so close from the Snows Retreat...Because it always takes me back, especially Snows Retreat , 4 to 5 weeks of coming out of retreat. So I probably, we're still in that retreat mode and The Three Principal...When we went into the last Lamrim retreat, so it was... Hu...Yeah...

I: And what do you think makes it so blissful, for you?

P1: I think it's being...I mean I love meditation and I love retreat, you know? I think I must have done a lot of retreat in past lives... Because I just love retreat and I always feel... (Pause)

How do I feel on retreat? I just feel (pause)...Gosh! I can't find words to explain how I feel on retreat...

I just think that there's where I want to be all the time. Which is not really helpful for other people (laughter)...I just...I can't put it into words actually...

I find the teachings, being in Tharpaland which is a very very special place and all the blessings, you know? At Tharpaland

and also Venerable Tarchin's teachings... I mean Venerable Tarchin is the most wonderful teacher you know?

Who he is and you feel his love

For P1 the short retreat was experienced with positive feelings of inner peace and joy. Contributing to these were the activities of engaging in meditation and listening to teachings.

For P1 the way the short retreat was experienced was influenced by her having been on a long retreat previous to it. The time P1 takes to come out of retreat is more or less the break between retreats. Thus P1 reflects she still is within the frame of mind of the long retreat when she entered the short one.

*For P1 the blissfulness of being on retreat is due to engaging in meditation under retreat conditions. P1 believes this to be the result of having done it often in past lives thus creating a tendency to enjoy this activity again now in this life as well as a feeling of familiarity with the retreat mode.

P1 struggles to express how she feels on retreat, not finding the words to express her feelings while displaying a facial expression of joy, satisfaction and fulfillment.

P1 feels so positively about engaging in retreat that she would spend all of her time doing so if possible. However P1 does not choose to do so because she believes this would not be the best solution at the present time for accomplishing her goal of being of help and benefiting other people.

For P1 the retreat centre has special characteristics such as the blessings which are understood as positive inspiring energy received from those who are accomplished realized beings who have engaged in retreat previously in the same place.

For P1 the retreat master is a very qualified teacher, somebody she looks up to.

P1 is moved by the retreat master's love for his students, his sincere wish for them to be happy. P1 feels loved by the retreat master.

<p>and his real wish for you to progress and practice the Path and to attain Liberation and Enlightenment, you know? And, yeah... I: So that's part of the blissful experience...? P1: Yeah, I think so... It's a...Yeah...</p>	<p>P1 is also moved by the retreat master's sincere wish for his students to make progress along the Buddhist spiritual training. P1 feels the retreat master wishes her to attain a state of freedom from suffering and to realize her full potential and overcome all of her limitations becoming permanently happy and being of help to others.</p>
<p>I: When you say delusions do manifest when you are on retreat, how is that? P1: I think it's as I said before, you know? Your mind is so subtle, we're so internal</p>	<p>*On retreat P1 accesses different and deeper levels of consciousness having greater insight and introspection ability thus being better able to monitor her consciousness and identify dysfunctional cognitions and negative emotions. Her focus is an internal one rather than an external one, she directs her attention to her internal processes during the time of retreat.</p>
<p>and what comes up in your mind there's no other distractions to stop you from seeing your delusions and I think they manifest quite strongly because of that.</p>	<p>P1 is better able to identify her own dysfunctional cognitions and negative emotions while on retreat due to the absence of activities that could function as a distraction, an escape. For P1 also due to this greater level of awareness and insight she experiences the dysfunctional cognitions and negative emotions in a more intense way because she stays with the awareness of that experience rather than neglecting it.</p>
<p>Because you're not outside and you're not rushing around doing the shopping or racing to class or you know? Doing something else. You're actually in retreat and you are looking at yourself. You're not looking at anything else.</p>	<p>On retreat P1 focuses exclusively at engaging in introspection, her focus of attention is directed inwards. This contrasts with P's experience of daily life when she experiences more difficulty having the same internal attitude due to the external actions she needs to engage in and which pull her focus of attention outwards.</p>
<p>It's an opportunity to actually look at yourself and look at your ignorance, your self-grasping, you know? That is the opportunity in retreat, because that's all you doing.</p>	<p>For P1 retreat is a special opportunity to gain greater knowledge about herself. For P1 the retreat conditions/setting enhances and propitiates this. On retreat P1 becomes aware of her own dysfunctional belief and cognition that lead her to perceive herself as existing independently of other phenomena in a fixed way, inherently existent and true. For P1 this dysfunctional belief and cognition also applies to other phenomena and leads her to perceive them to exist in the way they appear to her consciousness. According to the Buddhist model this way of cognizing is the source of all other dysfunctional</p>

That's your mind you're looking at because you're silent; you're not speaking to anybody.

Because what we normally do is when we're feeling bad or you know? You may be feeling a bit of anger at something or someone has annoyed you, you want to talk to someone about it...And like "You know what he did?" and this sort of thing, you know? And that's what we do

but in retreat you can't do that, you've got to deal with it yourself and you actually deal with it by practicing the Dharma, you know?

And your usual practice is to actually either try to abandon or control that delusion. Stop it. Just stop that delusion, you know? Don't give it any attention

and you're able to do that in retreat, Whereas in....OK it comes up and you not quite probably as acutely aware because there are so many other distractions when you, you know? When you're out in the ordinary world, if you like. That's what I find anyway

and I think that's a wonderful part about retreat is that you can actually look deeply at yourself

and see what you have to try and abandon.

cognitions and negative emotions, thus the cause of all suffering.

For P1 being silent and not engaging in any way of communicating with others improves her awareness of her own consciousness and internal processes.

On retreat P1 can not resort to her usual coping strategy for dealing with unpleasant feelings or emotions. Out of retreat she can talk to others about her experience and not change her perception of it, not take full responsibility for the quality of her experience. On retreat this is not an option for her.

On retreat P1 has to develop other strategies and cope on her own, taking full responsibility for the quality of her experience and how she handles negative emotions. The strategies P1 uses on retreat are to train in applying the Buddhist model to her own circumstances and to change her cognitions and consequent emotions.

P1's main coping strategy is to completely disengage or oppose and control whatever thoughts are disturbing her. This has many aspects to it consisting also of different and gradual levels in her spiritual training. P1 refers an aspect of this strategy is to remove any attention she might be putting into the dysfunctional undesired thought, emotion or feeling thus weakening its power over her.

For P1 this is possible to do in retreat, it is an achievable goal. In contrast P1's experience of being in daily life is that her level of awareness is not as acute due to engaging in activities that function as a distraction directing her awareness and focus outwards. P1 is aware her experience is a subjective one.

For P1 a positive aspect of retreat is the fact that she can engage in introspection in a deep level.

P1 can acknowledge what thoughts and actions she needs to stop in order to improve the quality of her experience of being.

<p>What your delusions are, what... You know?</p>	<p>As part of this introspection P1 identifies which dysfunctional cognitions and negative emotions are present in her mind.</p>
<p>Which is your strongest delusion, what keeps coming up</p>	<p>P1 also identifies which dysfunctional cognition or thought pattern is the one that has stronger intensity, and which are the most recurrent ones.</p>
<p>and I think in retreat we have the opportunity to do that and you can constantly do it</p>	<p>On retreat P1 feels she has the opportunity to engage in this level of introspection constantly.</p>
<p>whereas out, you know? It's quite different because</p>	<p>In contrast, on her daily life she might have opportunities but not with this level of consistency.</p>
<p>I know when we first came out of silence I was really shocked at how strongly that self-grasping and this ignorance just came back. "Voom"! Like that, you know? The delusions just came back so...</p>	<p>When coming out of silence P1 experienced the contrast between the experience of being in retreat and the experience of daily life. This contrast was experienced by P1 with shock and surprise. P1 while monitoring her mind in this process could identify the ignorance of grasping at her self as being inherently existent functioning with greater intensity as she started engaging in communication with others. Along with it came other dysfunctional mental patterns and negative emotions in a more intense fashion than the one being experienced while on retreat.</p>
<p>And I know I got quite upset about that because I'd managed to control them even though they were quite strong I had managed to control them so I had quite a...A nice period when even though they were coming up they were not quite so strong and I was able to control them and we had that mind, you know?</p>	<p>P1 was disturbed as she felt she was partially losing the level of control over her mental experience she had gained on retreat. On retreat P1 acknowledged the presence of dysfunctional mental patterns and negative emotions. These however were not experienced in such an intense level as usual. P1 could thus relate to them differently and this was experienced as pleasant.</p>
<p>And when we came out of retreat and we started talking, slowly coming out and we started talking, they were there.</p>	<p>When P1 progressively came out of silent retreat and started to engage in communication with others she identified in her own consciousness the presence of the dysfunctional mental patterns and negative emotions with greater intensity. For P1 this was quite disturbing and experienced as negative.</p>
<p>Just like that and that was quite shocking</p>	<p>P1 believes that many other retreaters had</p>

<p>and I think a lot of people experienced that, you know? It was difficult to deal with...</p>	<p>the same experience when coming out of silence.</p>
<p>I: Because you were so aware of it? P1: Oh yeah! Yeah, completely aware.</p>	<p>*For P1 having a greater level of awareness of her own mental processes contributed to the perceived contrast of being silent and out of silence. Thus leading to the unpleasant feeling due to a greater awareness of one's less functional aspects being present and not having however control over them.</p>
<p>You are controlling your delusions all the time. You are controlling all this anger, self-grasping</p>	<p>On retreat P1 is at all times monitoring her mental patterns and emotional states and training to control the ones that are perceived as dysfunctional, negative and undesired. For P1 anger and self-grasping ignorance are examples such.</p>
<p>and in retreat you're sitting next to people and things annoy you, you know? Someone might make a constant noise or do something that really annoys you on retreat</p>	<p>On retreat when faced with situations that arise from interaction with others P1 may respond internally by experiencing annoyance and other unpleasant feelings. For P1 this is challenging and seen as part of her spiritual training.</p>
<p>and you can write a letter complaining about it and let the managers deal with it or you can practice the Dharma and practice love and compassion and that works.</p>	<p>P1 describes different coping strategies for the same situation; these are both external and internal. An external strategy would be to report the undesired behavior from fellow retreaters to the managers and allow them to solve the problem. An internal strategy would be to cope with it herself by practicing Buddha's teachings, specifically practicing love and compassion, developing a feeling of appreciation for the other person and wishing him/her to be happy and free from suffering. For P1 the latter works for her.</p>
<p>So all the time, you know you're... Yeah, practicing the Dharma, you know?</p>	<p>P1 on retreat is training constantly on applying Buddha's teachings to the situations that she experiences to improve the quality of her experience, Buddha-s teaching consist essentially of internal solutions for internal problems of suffering, unpleasant feelings.</p>
<p>I: So when you say practicing the Dharma... P1: What you're doing is using the Dharma to actually by practicing Love and Compassion for someone who is maybe annoying you, someone who is sitting behind you and constantly making noises...</p>	<p>*P1 overcomes her own feelings of annoyance and anger and copes with situations in which these arise by essentially developing the wish that whoever she may be annoyed at be happy and free from suffering.</p>
<p>I mean, I had one experience of that.</p>	<p>P1 has had practical experiences of this. In</p>

<p>Someone behind me...What annoys me on retreat is people who whisper things.</p>	<p>one occasion P1 sat next to a fellow retreatee who would produce undesired sounds which were perceived by P1 as being annoying.</p>
<p>Now I've done that myself, so, you know? This is like I've done, so I'm experiencing it (laughter) and I have always...found that that really disturbed my practice when...if I was meditating.</p>	<p>P1 acknowledges she has engaged in the same kind of behavior in previous occasions, producing undesired noises that could have disturbed others. P1 perceives this situation arising for her as an unpleasant feeling now due to the causes she created in the past engaging in the same kind of behavior and disturbing others. P1 sees this as a cause and effect under the Buddhist teaching of the law of Karma.</p>
<p>I: So what would happen? P1: What would happen? I'd feel this annoyance coming up and I... I mean, that is just anger. When someone is doing something that annoys you, you know? Anger is quite subtle at stages, you know?</p>	<p>*P1 experience the situation previously described with a feeling of annoyance. P1 identifies this as being a subtler level of anger. For P1 anger is an aversion to something that somebody is doing and that causes unpleasant feelings to arise in one's own mind.</p>
<p>So what I did was I practiced Love and Compassion</p>	<p>P1 coped with her feeling of anger by practicing love and compassion for the people she experienced as annoying.</p>
<p>and I turned it around completely and I stopped being annoyed and I loved that person and had compassion for them. So you can do that in retreat, you know? So, yeah...</p>	<p>For P1 this brought about a shift in her experienced. P1's experience of annoyance came to an end and she experienced feelings of love and compassion for the person previously perceived as unpleasant. For P1 this can be done on retreat.</p>
<p>I: So when you say that you practiced Love and Compassion, how would you do that? P1: I would rejoice in their virtue and their merit of being in retreat</p>	<p>*P1 practiced love and compassion by rejoicing in the other person's good qualities and good fortune of being on retreat.</p>
<p>and you see all the things that people do in retreat and you...Nice, kind things that person had done for someone else and I would think of all these things</p>	<p>P1 also contemplated the good deeds that person had done for others which she had witnessed.</p>
<p>and also think that this person is my mother and this person has loved and cherished me in the past so, you know?</p>	<p>P1 also cultivated the view of recognizing this person as being her mother and contemplated how this person had loved her and cherished her in the past.</p>
<p>I would try and work it and practice in that way so that I would not feel this annoyance...</p>	<p>P1 continuously attempted to work through the difficult situation by practicing according to the strategies she described so that she could cope with her unpleasant feeling of</p>

Because it's upsetting for yourself that these things come up, you know? Because we don't like to think that we're angry or jealous or anything else like that you know? I think we prefer not to even look at that because we don't want to acknowledge that we have these, you know? Delusions keep on coming up, that's the word! (Laughter) We don't want to acknowledge that we get angry. We don't want to acknowledge that we get jealous or attached at this or that or resent anything.

We don't want to acknowledge all of that. But I find in retreat that we really have to acknowledge it, you know?

And do something about it. I did anyway (laughter).

I: Why do you think that is?

P1: Do you mean why we don't want to acknowledge it? It's uncomfortable! That's unpleasant. I mean...

And if we want to get rid of it we got to do something about it and that's painful and we don't want that pain.

We don't want to suffer that so therefore we just tuck it away, you know? We just shut it down and we and we think "OK that's fine, we've dealt with that" and in natural fact we haven't, it's still there and it still keeps coming up.

I: So is that part of the experience of being on retreat that you choose to get on and deal

annoyance making it disappear. She did so by reinterpreting the situation she perceived initially as annoying, also focusing on different aspects of the person she perceived as annoying.

For P1 experiencing these feelings of annoyance was upsetting. P1 identifies the feeling of unpleasantness as deriving from acknowledging having distorted mental patterns and negative emotions or feelings such as:

anger (holding the view that something or someone is inherently negative and wanting to be separate from it or destroy it), attachment (holding the view that something or someone is inherently attractive or desirable and wishing to possess it or not be separate from it), jealousy (holding the view that...), resentment or the like.

P1 feels that on retreat she has no choice but to acknowledge having delusions.

For P1 acknowledging is not enough and she must take action to change her undesired situation. P1 did this on retreat.

*For P1 recognizing to herself having distorted perceptions and negative emotions brings about some level of discomfort and an unpleasant feeling.

For P1 taking responsibility and actively engaging in changing her undesired mental patterns is something that needs to be done even if it means bearing some level of pain. However she acknowledges that not being willing to tolerate some level of pain in order to overcome distorted mental patterns is a big obstacle to bringing about change in oneself.

For P1 suppressing her own negative emotions could happen as a defense mechanism in order not to experience the pain that comes from addressing negative mental patterns and emotions and the behavior influenced by them. Another defense mechanism that could occur would be to deny experiencing negative mental

<p>with all those minds? P1: Yeah, uh...That's one of the benefits I find from retreat. Is going on retreat and dealing with those minds.</p>	<p>patterns and emotions. While on retreat P1 learns to cope with negative mental patterns and emotions in more constructive and effective ways and she sees that as a benefit of being on retreat.</p>
<p>Because I've dealt, I mean... I went to the snows retreat the year before and that was an extremely hard retreat for me. That was my first snows retreat...that was 4 months.</p>	<p>P1 experienced difficulty when she engaged on a four month winter retreat for the first time. During it P1 experienced negative mental patterns and emotions with great intensity.</p>
<p>And a lot of things came up for me, you know? That I thought in the past, you know? "That's no problem!" you know? "I've overcome these".</p>	<p>For P1 part of the difficulty was that she realized some issues from the past which she believed she had resolved had not in fact been overcome. P1 experienced recurrent thoughts about these and became aware they were still a challenge to her.</p>
<p>But it just came up really strong and it was extremely difficult for me but I faced them and I thought I just...stop these. I'm not going to shut them back down again, I'm going to deal with them and I did, you know?...</p>	<p>P1 responded to the discomfort this brought about by developing the wish not to shut down the feelings she was experiencing but rather to face them and work through them. P1 decided to stop reacting in the way she had until then and try a different approach. P1 feels this helped her change the quality of her experience.</p>
<p>Sometimes wee (*little) residues come up because I don't think, you know? The imprints are still there and probably part of it is still there.</p>	<p>For P1 at times unresolved issues may manifest in less intense ways. P1 believes there are levels to resolving her issues and dealing with her negative mental patterns and emotions. For P1 improvement is possible progressively. However for as long as there is any level of underlying unresolved issue it can still disturb her peace of mind and affect her experience.</p>
<p>And retreat is wonderful for that because you are just looking at yourself, you know? And that's not easy to do. (Laughter)</p>	<p>P1 feels positively about retreat for providing her with the opportunity to engage in introspection which she admits not to be an easy task to perform. For P1 the benefits are however greater than the discomfort and make the task worthwhile.</p>
<p>I: So when, when you say that all these things come up and then you deal with them, how is that process? P1: The process, what happens is that it arises, you know? Whatever it is that...Something from the past that's been very painful, hurtful.</p>	<p>*On retreat P1 can experience at times unpleasant feelings or thoughts which are experienced with great awareness. These are hurtful or painful feelings associated to events from the past.</p>

<p>I don't know whether it is because it's karma... I mean this is karma but from previous lives ripening in this life and then it does come up as very painful experiences in retreat</p>	<p>P1 recognizes unpleasant feelings that occur in the present as the result of previous actions (mental, verbal or physical) she engaged in, whether in this life or in previous lives. Making sense of her experience according to the law of karma (cause and effect) is part of her spiritual training.</p>
<p>and I actually was supported by the Sangha and they gave me advice because I talked to them about it. I needed to. Talk to them about it</p>	<p>When experiencing difficulty on retreat P1 was supported by the spiritual community of the retreat centre. After recognizing she needed help to cope with her difficult experience P1 spoke to them.</p>
<p>and I was given meditations and practices to do to help with that and I did that throughout retreat</p>	<p>P1 was then given advice on specific meditations and practices to address her issues. P1 followed the advice and put it into practice throughout the whole of her retreat experience.</p>
<p>and it turned everything around, you know?</p>	<p>Engaging in the specific meditations and practices to cope with her difficulty brought about a shift in the way P1 experienced things thus improving the quality of her experience.</p>
<p>And it just, you know? I just felt, just so much...A deep, deep wish that this would never happen again, there would be no pain and nobody should suffer in the way that, you know?</p>	<p>Part of the shift for P1 was that she developed a feeling of compassion for both herself and others. Using her own experience of suffering as a starting point P1 developed a profound sincere wish that nobody, neither her nor others, would experience suffering ever again. In this way P1 was again at peace.</p>
<p>That's the way I felt and the whole thing turns around beautifully, you know? And, yeah, retreat enabled me to do that.</p>	<p>For P1 this the retreat conditions and activity enabled her to learn how to bring about this shift in her experience, transforming her experience of suffering into a positive mind of compassion and in this way overcoming suffering itself.</p>
<p>I: So the advice you were given were specific meditations for what you were experiencing. P1: Yeah, yeah. I: That's beautiful... P1: Yeah. Yeah, it's wonderful.</p>	<p>*The help P1 got from the spiritual practitioners residents of the retreat centre consisted of specific meditation practices to act as an opponent to her unpleasant experience. This enabled her to reinterpret the situation that caused her distress in a different way thus leading her to change her thoughts and the associated emotions.</p>
<p>I: And you're saying you used the experience</p>	<p>*P1's feeling of compassion for others, the</p>

<p>of this pain that was coming up so to develop this wish that other people would not suffer as well. How was that? P1: That other people wouldn't suffer? Because the suffering was so, so painful and the people who were suffering, it was really...I was part of that suffering but there were other people who were really suffering and...</p>	<p>wish that others were free from suffering developed partly due to her contemplation on the intensity of the suffering experience for herself and also from realizing that other people were experiencing suffering as well. P1 used her experience of suffering and her ability to feel empathy and in this way developed compassion for others, transforming a negative emotion that caused her to suffer into a positive her that allowed her to be at peace. There was a shift from being self centered to being empathic and altruistic.</p>
<p>Because I was angry at that, that manifested as an anger, you know?</p>	<p>P1 experienced feelings of anger during the retreat as a result of having felt anger in the past in the situation she was now recalling.</p>
<p>And I was angry and I didn't want to be angry. I had to change.</p>	<p>When P1 realized she was experiencing feelings of anger she then decided she did not want to continue to experience those feelings of anger due to the suffering they caused her. P1 felt the need to bring about change in herself in order to overcome her anger and the suffering associated to it.</p>
<p>I didn't want to feel that anymore and I felt pain for the people that were feeling, that were suffering and I was angry as well so, you know?</p>	<p>By contemplating her own suffering resultant from being angry P1 then expanded her awareness of others in such a way that she felt empathy for those experiencing suffering.</p>
<p>I just practiced for the whole of the retreat. This came up really early on in retreat, so for the whole of retreat, the 4 months, I worked very hard at my practice so that I could change that</p>	<p>To accomplished the desired changes in her personal experience P1 trained herself for as long as the retreat lasted (4 months) in practices of love and compassion, cultivating a view of herself and others being equal in that all being wish to be happy and free from suffering, developing thus the wish for others to be happy and free from suffering.</p>
<p>and that anger completely disappeared and Love and...Come up and real Compassion that nobody should ever suffer the way these people had suffered and that...My anger completely dissipated. It disappeared and it was just a great Love and a deep, deep wish that nobody should</p>	<p>P1's desired change came about as a result of her training; her perception of situations and people was different. P1's feeling of anger gave place to a feeling of love, wishing others to be happy. P1 also experienced feelings of compassion, wishing that nobody would ever suffer. For P1 this shift was accomplished through the meditation practices on retreat, in which she trained herself to reinterpret situations differently leading to a new view of herself and others and thus leading her to experience different emotions than previously.</p>

I: It seems very personal, whatever happens...

P1: Yeah, it was very personal.

I: Because you could think that one goes on retreat and all people would have similar, I don't know, doing the teachings and you go into the same sessions, but it seems from what you are saying that everybody is doing sort of their own retreat because of...

P1: Yeah, I think so, definitely. Because everything that comes up for each individual is quite different because their experiences are quite different, you know? The way they see things are different, the meditations are different, everything,

every individual has their own thing that comes out and other people suffered a lot too. I know other people had, you know, a lot of suffering and experiences that came up in retreat

and it changes things, it changes things...

I: How do you think it changes things?

P1: I think you become more peaceful and it changes you from being an angry person to someone who has a wish that nobody suffers. That's what it did for me anyway.

And I think it softened me, you know? It softens your heart. Yeah, and I think that you probably consider other people a lot more. See their pain a lot more. You wish everybody to be happy and to be free from suffering.

I'm not saying I'm perfectly in that, you know? Because I still have a lot of delusions and self-cherishing and ignorance and the rest of it. I mean, but... You know?

*For P1 retreat is a very personal subjective experience, unique and different for each individual.

For P1 on retreat different individuals have different issues to work on and improve because they all have different past experiences. Different people perceive things in a different way, their mental patterns and emotions are different. Thus also the experience of engaging in the meditations will be experienced in a different way, everything will, they will all have a subjective personal experience.

For P1 every person will experience different personal difficulties on retreat. P1 knows from the experience of her fellow retreaters that some of them also experienced intense suffering and unresolved issues that came up for them to deal with.

It is P1's experience that retreat can bring about changes in people, in the way they perceive the world, themselves and others thus relating to all of these in a different fashion. P1 became more peaceful and changed from being angry to being compassionate.

P1's experience of being on retreat softened her heart. P1 became less self centered and more altruistic. P1 also became more considerate towards others and more empathic with their experience of suffering. As a result P1 developed feelings of love (wishing them happiness) and compassion (wishing them to be free from suffering for everybody).

P1 feels she has not yet completely accomplished a level of mastery of her mental and emotional experience in such a way that only love and compassion arise. P1 still has negative mental patterns and emotions such as a selfish attitude

It has made a huge difference to my life and the way I see other people and...Yeah...and Myself...

I: And yourself?

P1: Oh, yeah! And myself because I was quite hard on myself, I still am but...Yeah...

I: So how did the way you see yourself change in retreat?

P1: You see the changes after retreat. You don't see things so much in retreat. Yeah, I just thought that, you know? I never thought that I was a particularly nice person to people (laughter) you know? And I know that's not true, you know?

It... That changes. It changes you, yeah...

I: So you were seeing that when you back to your life after coming out of the retreat?

P1: Yeah...Yeah...Yes you do.

I: And how was that?

P1: Going out of retreat and...There was a lot of...It was not easy, you know...

Oh! This time?! It was wonderful. Yeah, it was a lot easier this time.

I: Right.

P1: Yeah, because there were a lot of blessings and you sort of...Yeah, you know? It was a lot easier .

Yes, things will come up but...

Venerable Tarchin talks about the "boings" when you come out of retreat. There's plenty of "boings"! (Laughter)

I: What's that, the "boings"?

P1: Well, when something sort of happens and you think "Ah! Back in Samsara!" (Unpleasant facial expression as if in pain)

considering herself to be more important than others and her happiness to be more important than that of others< and an ignorance that perceives herself and other phenomena to exist inherently and in the way they appear to her mind as well as other negative mental patterns and emotions.

However for P1 retreat has played a big role in her attempt to bring about changes in her personal experience of being. P1 can observe there have been changes in her perception of life, of other people and also of herself. P1 became gentler with herself after her retreat experience than she was previous to it.

*P1 only became aware of the changes she had brought about in herself due to her training on retreat once she was already out of retreat and engaging in her daily life's activities. P1 self image had changed, before retreat she did not consider herself to be a nice person to others and she could now admit that not to be entirely true.

*For P1 the process of going out of retreat can be difficult. Coming out of her long retreat was indeed difficult. However in contrast P1's experience of going out of the short Lamrim retreat was a pleasant experience and easier compared to coming out of the long retreat. P1 mentions the blessings (inspiring energy that helps her transform her mind) as a condition for making things easier.

For P1 there are always difficult moments when coming out of retreat.

P1 recalls her retreat master labels these difficult moments as "boings". In P1's experience these occur often in the process of going out of retreat.

*For P1 these difficult moments are situations when conditions are brought together and she becomes aware of her own negative mental patterns and emotions. These remind

I: So it's really painful?

P1: It can be, you know?

But you just think "OK, that's OK" you know, "that's OK". (Soothing expression)

I: So the "boing" is the initial shock?

P1: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

I: So what do you do with it?

P1: What you do is you look at it and you think "Well, that doesn't exist, it just doesn't exist"

I: When you say it doesn't exist....what? And that makes it better?

P1: Oh, yeah, definitely!

I: And what do you do then?

P1: Then you try and just put it aside and just, you now, well, it's there, it just doesn't exist, it just doesn't exist, just do whatever you're doing with a peaceful mind.

I: So it gives you that space to react to the situation in a different way?

P1: Yeah, yeah, definitely!

I: So would you say that you've been able to learn that through doing retreat as well?

P1: Oh, definitely yes! I've learnt a lot doing retreat, definitely.

Retreat for me has been, I mean... I know I'm quite fortunate because a lot of people don't have the opportunity to go on retreat and I have had, you know? A lot of opportunity to go on retreat so I've done that

and I have progressed in the Dharma very quickly being on retreat.

And I think if I hadn't done retreat I wouldn't be who I am now, this retreat has done so much to me.

her of being still in the cyclic existence contaminated by the ignorance that grasp at phenomena as inherently existent and is the root of all suffering leading to attachment, anger, jealousy, etc. For P1 this contrasts to her retreat experience when she feels having greater control over her mind which is made more accessible also due to the retreat conditions which are ideal for training. P1 acknowledges these difficult moments, the boings, as being somewhat painful at times.

P1 has coping strategies for dealing with the difficult moments experienced in the process of coming out of retreat.

Primarily P1 soothes herself by thinking it will represent no problem that she can not overcome. P1 recognizes these moments as the initial reaction of shock when confronted with new conditions which are more challenging.

P1 then recalls the emptiness of all phenomena by contemplating how things lack inherent existence and thus this phenomenon itself cannot exist in the way it is perceived (painfully).

P1 then removes her focus of attention from this painful feeling and proceeds to do whatever she was doing with a tranquil mind. P1 states this to be a successful strategy that provides her with the space to react and relate to situations and unpleasant feelings differently. P1 acknowledges having learned these strategies on retreat as well as many other things.

P1 considers herself to be fortunate because of having had the opportunity to engage in retreat> becoming more aware of herself and her mental patterns and emotions, learning different ways of interpreting situations, learning how to transform her negative mental patterns and emotions and her suffering into positive experiences and feelings.

P1 recognizes she made quick progress in her spiritual training due to engaging on retreat.

P1 feels retreat has changed her way of being. P1 sees this as something extremely positive, she has improved herself through

I: And how does that progress...How do you feel that progress? How can you tell?

P1: I think you can tell through your daily life. You've got a very peaceful mind, a different approach to things instead of being frantic about things because I was constantly frantic about everything, you know? (Laughter) Always in a hurry, racing here racing there, doing everything, you know? And my mind wasn't peaceful about things. I used to be "Oh! I've got to do this!" and get anxious about things and ..."I need to get this done!" I don't get that so much now. Everything is much more peaceful and I'm much more at a quieter pace. My mind is a lot more peaceful, I can see what I'm doing more clearly and can see what needs to be done more clearly, yeah...

I: So not only you were peaceful during retreat but coming out of retreat in your daily life, it does affect your experience?

P1: Oh, yes! Yeah...yeah...yeah...definitely.

I: How wonderful!

P1: (laughs) Yeah! ...

I: I can see why you enjoy so much...

P1: Yeah, retreat is very special, it's been...

I: ...You keep mentioning a lot of benefits.

P1: Yeah, oh yeah! Definitely! (Laughter) definitely!

I: Let's see how we are doing with time...We have to go...Is there anything else you would like to say before we finish?

P1: Hmm, you know? I would dedicate and wish that you could go on retreat and enjoy the snows retreat! (Laughter)

I: Thank you so much!

P1: Especially with venerable Tarchin who is such a wonderful being...

I: That would be wonderful! We'll dedicate so that everybody has the opportunity to go on retreat.

being on retreat.

*P1 monitors the progress she has made on her spiritual training while engaging on retreat through observing her experience later, when engaging in her daily life's activities. P1 states experiencing a very peaceful mind and a different way of being in the world (relating to things differently). An example given is that her experience of being frantic about things and getting anxious has diminished and her experience of inner peace has increased allowing her to do things at a quieter pace and experiencing a greater level of mental clarity. P1 acknowledges that her retreat experience has positively affected her daily life experience.

*P1 sees many benefits from having engaged on retreat.

As we are about to finish and P1 is given the opportunity to add anything to the interview she finishes by dedicating her merits and wishing that I can go on and enjoy the long snows retreat with her retreat master.

Participante 2

Meaning Units	Psychological Meaning
<p>I: So can you describe for me the experience of being on this meditation retreat? P2: Which one would you like me to talk about? I: The last one you've been on. P2: OK, the one I think it's the the Pre-Spring Festival one. It was wonderful because I felt that I dived straight in without any effort. As you know I'd been at Tharpaland twice before. Once for a Post Spring Festival Retreat, 3 years ago and then the second half of the Snows last time and I think a great foundation has been laid and I think also with the work that I had done since and the teaching.</p> <p>I felt, I felt the discursive mind was..I was able to set aside more easily</p> <p>and I realized that this time I still had lots of thoughts and distractions (laughter) but I was able to return more quickly to...To whatever the focus of the meditation was and it felt like... Yeah, my discursive mind and the kind of obsessional thinking was much less...Reduced, yeah.</p> <p>And Tarchin started off with the first line of The Principal Aspects of The Path about the Spiritual Guide and talked about that and that really drew my attention to him and just what a deep lovely being he is</p> <p>and how I must really trust him</p> <p>and I think he and I are both similar and different, you know? With my stuff on psychological type. I think he's an introverted feeling type, which I think you may be I don't</p>	<p>P2 perceived himself engaging in the retreat with great intensity effortlessly. For P2 this happened due to several factors he considers contributed to what he calls a foundation></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) his familiarity with the retreat centre, he had engaged in retreat there before 3) he had engaged in training himself continuously in his daily life 4) the teaching on the retreat <p>P2 was aware of his own discursive mind and he was able to disengage from it with greater ease compared to previous experiences.</p> <p>P2 compared this experience with his previous retreat experiences. P2 experienced many distractions and conceptual thoughts during this and previous retreats. P2 monitored his response to these and compared it with his previous experiences to search for indicators of improvement. P2 found that > his ability to refocus his attention on his meditation object had improved in the sense that it was quicker than before P2 also felt his discursive mind and obsessional thinking were less frequent.</p> <p>For P2 the retreat master is somebody who has extraordinary qualities, a profound and loving person who performs the function of the guiding him along his spiritual training.</p> <p>P2 trusts and relies upon the retreat master recognizing in him the ability to guide him.</p> <p>To some extent P2 identifies with the retreat master but also acknowledges the differences between them. For reference P2 uses a psychological type classification</p>

know. And i'm an extroverted thinking type, quite different but we both have intuition. So, so I don't know, he represents an opposite for me but one I can understand and feel drawn to and... Yeah, yeah...

So, yeah...I'm just thinking now of Sandy who was one of the people on the retreat, who is the Admin. Director in Glasgow, at the thank you party for him at the end of the last Snows Retreat asked me would I kind of make a thank you speech for Tarchin. Well that was a wonderful privilege and an honor and I told them about how I kind of got the connection with Tarchin and talked about his wild poetic imagination

and then retold the story that he told three years ago that had me connect with him about how everybody is our mothers. Do you know that story?

I: No. Would you tell me that story?

P2: Oh yeah, sure! So, a Jen who, I don't know if that's the Slavic name for a John but...John had immigrated from Sarajevo when he was 17, when the troubles were there. And he'd done really well, he'd been to the London Business School and had really established himself in the business career and he was hurrying one day towards the London Subway to go to the city and he noticed that people were kind of skirting around the front of the underground station and then a few more steps later he sort of...A smell reached his nostrils and then he looked. There was someone with a hat, you know? Out sitting slumped against the side of the subway station column with the hat out begging. He looked at the hat, looked up and it was his mother whom he hadn't seen for 10 years! So he dropped his briefcase and took her in his arms and inside half an hour he was back in his apartment in London, bathing her. So I thought, this was Tarchin's

system he works with in his professional occupation. The similarities are that they both are quite intuitive. The differences between them are that the retreat master would be introverted feeling type in contrast with himself who would be an extroverted thinking type. P2 at the time of the interview tries to label the researcher according to this system, she might be an introverted feeling type.

P2 can relate to the retreat master and feel interested and quite close to him although or maybe even because he sees him as an opposite to his own personality.

P2 recalls a Buddhist social gathering organized with the purpose of thanking the retreat master at the end of a long winter retreat when P2 was asked by a fellow retreatee to deliver the thank you speech. P2 felt positive about it, privileged and honored. P2 chose to tell the story of how he connected with this retreat master whom he recognizes as having a "poetic imagination".

P2 then retold a true story the retreat master had used during his teaching to illustrate how all beings are our mothers (a Buddhist view that helps practitioners develop the good qualities of love and compassion by recognizing all living beings as their kind mothers). The use of this story by the retreat master moved P2 and helped him connect to him. For P2 the retreat master is somebody with very special qualities which he admires /looks up to.

<p>teaching on recognizing everybody as your mother! (moved). So he's a very special being.</p> <p>So that's how it was, that's how the retreat was for me, a kind of profound and...(sigh)</p> <p>I really am resonating most to the teaching on Emptiness.</p> <p>It's a remarkable three pages. I think, you know, the Renunciation, Bodhichitta and Emptiness and...</p> <p>Possibly because I started teaching that as a sort of intermediate between GP and FP, I've been given that opportunity, and we just managed to stop (laughter) for the summer, before we got to Emptiness, so this is beautiful</p> <p>and there were those two days after the retreat ended so that the monks and nuns would come back down. So I asked Tarchin how I could best use those two days staying up there, perhaps solitary and he suggested that I meditated on the Emptiness of the I. So that's what I did.</p> <p>I: And how was that experience for you? P2: It was(sigh)...It was good, it was good.</p> <p>I just (laughter)... It was funny both on and off the cushion because as you may have guessed I'm an extrovert and so I went into silence after saying goodbye to everybody.</p>	<p>For P2 the retreat was a profound experience.</p> <p>During the retreat the teaching on Emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomena, how things lack inherent existence made a deep impression on P2.</p> <p>P2 is impressed by the teachings of the retreat> renunciation (the determination to renounce the suffering of future lives in the cycle of rebirth contaminated by self-grasping ignorance), Bodhichitta (the intention to fulfill one's potential and overcome one's limitations to benefit all living beings by attaining enlightenment) and emptiness (the ultimate nature of phenomena).</p> <p>P2 was given the opportunity to teach in the center he normally attends and he has stopped before getting to this theme of emptiness. P2 refers this factor contributing to his appreciation of the retreat.</p> <p>After the group retreat had finished P2 solicited advice from the retreat master on to how to best make use of his time in the retreat centre expressing his wish to engage in solitary retreat. The retreat master suggested he did so meditating on "the emptiness of the I", the emptiness of the I we normally perceive, an inherently existent I. P2 did this.</p> <p>*For P2 engaging in this short solitary retreat was a positive experience.</p> <p>P2 had an interesting experience as he monitored himself both during the meditation sessions and the meditation breaks. A challenge for P2 was to go out of silence after the group retreat and then engaging again in silence for his solitary retreat as he usually enjoys communicating to others and considers himself to be an extroverted person.</p>
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So I had two days...But I did feel...Yeah, I had my breakfast in the other room, you know? Quietly, but I thought the meals I'm going to go in with everybody talking and things but I'm just not going to say anything

and it was really interesting because it was really like a medi...I realized how much, you now? I kind of want people to feed me energy, as an extrovert and that was just...Interesting to see that mind at work.

So, yeah, it was...Lots of insights and it seems to be...

That mind seems to be spontaneously occurring at different points in the...In the festival here...

I: OK.

P2: Yeah and it's been a different experience.

For the first time I volunteered as a steward and...And off course you can't close your eyes and you can't write notes. So I think that would have been really difficult a few years ago...But, but I think, in all humility, I've developed a stability now, so you can go into that state, you know? Without necessarily having your mind, you know? Your eyes closed and it seemed to me almost...

Not quite no matter what the teaching but very often and it didn't even seem necessarily related to it but, off course obviously Geshe-la's teaching this morning...To provoke that mind of the Emptiness of Self and...Yeah....How he described it was, it's like a little advanced from last year.

When I wanted to do the Meditation on

While in his solitary retreat for 2 days P2 planed to have his first meal of the day in a different room separate from the other retreaters but to have the other meals with the group although remaining silent even if the rest weren't.

For P2 it was interesting to monitor himself and he became aware of his own need for being around others and how he gets energy from them, he became aware of being oriented more towards others and outwardly rather than to himself and inwardly.

P2-s level of self knowledge increased while on retreat and he experienced having many insights while engaging in an attitude of introspection.

P2's new level of insight and awareness was carried through after the retreat as he keeps monitoring himself after the retreat has finished.

P2's spiritual training has been affected by the retreat to an extent that he now experiences situations he has been exposed to in the past in a different way. P2 considers there has been improvement to the quality of his experience. Specifically in his voluntary work as a temple steward in a Buddhist Festival>To perform this task P2 must keep his eyes open at all times even when attending meditation sessions and teachings. P2 can't take notes either, must remained alert at all times. P2 would have found it difficult in the past to do this while remaining concentrated but he acknowledges he has now developed greater stability so that he can enter a state of mind similar to meditation, being concentrated, without closing his eyes.

The Spiritual Guide-s teachings on emptiness are for P2 an important part of his spiritual training.

Emptiness last year I just imagined those low clouds over Tharpaland just kind of washing back and forth across the forest, you know? Sometimes you'd see the edge of the fur trees and sometimes you wouldn't. This time it was, with Tarchin's teaching on Emptiness, what I got. I guess this tells you my image, do you know about LOP in your Linguistic Programming? No? OK. So anyway there's the idea that people represent their experience in different ways and so I think this is a visual, kinesthetic visual kind of metaphor, I imagined...

Oh! Do you now those films of clouds, you know? And you speed it up so you see the clouds? So, it felt like that. There was a sort of an opening and then the clouds were sort of like moving but not completely obscuring them, and opening and going in and out and that seemed to be a powerful image of Emptiness and especially the Union of The Two Truths because there was something there and yet it wasn't there.

So, and that was accompanied by a kind of reduction in intention in my stomach, I felt there was a letting go there because, you know, there...What's this solid structure, I mean, a fairly organized structured person, so it was like a dissolving of all of that. Not forgetting it but just being softer with it.

I: And the image...Did you use the image of the clouds to have the contemplation for your meditation, to get to the feeling of the "Emptiness of the I"? Or did it come from the feeling of the "Emptiness of the I"? Sort of as a, I don't know, as a visual kind of meditation? I'm kind of wondering how that happened for you...

P2: Yeah, for sure...Yeah, how it happened I think is that for the first time it came up out of the words that Tarchin said and my response to them. Then I...Then that image just spontaneously came up. That was probably

In the past P2 would resort to visualization of an image of clouds over the retreat centre in order to engage in emptiness meditation, that image reminded him of an object that cannot be seen at all times. P2 represents and expresses his experience of the meditation on emptiness in a kinesthetic visual metaphor and is aware of it.

P2 recalls footed films of clouds being speeded up and uses that as a kinesthetic visual metaphor to express his experience of engaging in the meditation on emptiness. P2 describes an opening and then although the clouds were moving they were not quite obscuring. P2 describes this as a powerful image of the emptiness and of the union of the two truths (ultimate truth meaning how things are empty of existing inherently and conventional truth meaning that things exist as mere appearances to mind performing functions in the relational world) in particular because he can relate to something being there and not being there simultaneously.

For P2 the experience of meditation on emptiness occurred simultaneously with a physical sensation in his body. P2 describes that the perception of himself as a solid structured, organized person was much reduced in intensity and although it did not disappear he could relate to it differently in a more gentle way that made him feel more comfortable.

*For P2 this image of the clouds manifested spontaneously without his intent while listening to the retreat master's instructions on the meditation on the emptiness of the I and the association between the image and instructions was established for him. Later he used this image intentionally to do that meditation on his own on solitary retreat as it reminded him of the retreat master-s instructions.

the first time and now in a more intentional way I'll say "OK, I'll meditate on the..." you know? When it was time to do the meditation on the solitary, you know, I'd deliberately use that.

I: To go back to...

P2: Yeah, that's right.

I: Could you tell me more about that? Of using an experience you've had on your retreat with a Retreat Master to then go back to your solitary retreat and...

P2: Well, I think, as I say Tarchin made a deep impression on me and...So I often do go back.

Perhaps it's because, you know, I'm still very much in the space of the retreat, under a week away and so my memory of Tarchin and his face is very...I came to that readily and now I'm...

What's happening to me is that I'm remembering the first time I saw him when he gave the introductory talks three years...I think it was four, no it was five. Five 5 years ago he did the introduction. And just seeing him when he did his prostrations before he spoke was only...

And he reminded me of the person who I probably had the most spiritual experience with...I'm not sure if you've heard of her, she's a Hindu Avatara, Mother Mira?

I: No, never heard of her...

P2: OK. She lives just outside Frankfurt. And I wrote...I can actually send you stuff on her. She had a big... She changed me from being a, a sort of a relaxed post-modern constructivist psychologist saying "Well, you know, religion is interesting, it's like marriage, it can be for better or worse but...I'm interested in it but I'm not sure about the ultimate nature of things"

and my experience with her was...She just gives a, what in Hinduism is called Darshan. Which is the gift of presence and she just looks at you and...Just an incredible experience and then she'd drop her gaze and it was the signal for you to put your head

*For P2 the retreat master has such an impact on him that he often recalls the experience of retreat. P2 acknowledges that at the time of the interview he still feels much in the space of retreat and thus the retreat master is very available in his memory.

When P2 saw the retreat master for the first time he was deeply impressed by his presence even before he had spoken. P2 watched while the retreat master physically prostrated to his own spiritual guide imagined in front of him before he delivered the teaching. This impacted P2 in a way that he generated deep admiration for the retreat master straight away.

The retreat master reminded P2 of a person with whom he had had what he describes as the most spiritual experience, a Hindu Avatara and this moved P2.

For P2 while in contact with this Hindu Avatara there occurred a shift in his view of and interest in religion. P2 stopped relating to religion as something interesting but that didn't affect his experience as he was not sure about it. P2 became genuinely interested in religion in a more personal way.

P2's experience with the Hindu Avatara consisted of being granted the gift of presence by her. The Hindu Avatara looked at him and then dropped her gaze, P2 dropped his head on her lap and she held him for roughly 25 seconds, she then relaxed

on her lap and she would just hold, hold the back of it for about twenty five seconds and...And then relax her grip and then you just, you know, get up and then next person will come forward and...That...

What was happening there I couldn't explain it away in the usual way that I did or sort of non committal way.

I'm just left with the experience, in order to do justice to the experience I had to say "No, there was something like coming from the other side".

So, that opened me up and that was now twelve years ago... although I went for three years of my last experience with her was probably about nine... Yeah nine. Nine years ago.

So seeing Tarchin reminded me of her...Yeah! That's interesting! I hadn't liked up those two, that intentional....What's come to be an intentional meditation experience on Emptiness with my actual perception of her and then of Tarchin.

It's like, when Mother Mira first came into the room...It's interesting. It's like there's this swirling energy around her and then it went into her head and it sort of cleared...

The nearest analogy I can think of was the water going over the Niagara Falls. It's like it just frequently slips over and then it becomes all this clouds and things, you know? But as you go and it's all quite, you know? And this whole energy was disappearing and I had a similar experience with Tarchin, there was this sort of like...Energy. It's what the Catholics, mystical theologians talk about being recollected, being so kind of collected inside and recollected, and when he did his prostration, yeah...So...

her grip and the next person took P2's place. This was experienced with aweness by P2.

P2 couldn't at the time make sense of the experience he had with the Hindu Avatara according to his view of the world.

P2 felt the need to make sense of the experience as he couldn't find explanation for what had happened. As much as he recognized his part in the experience there was something to the part played by the Hindu Avatara that he couldn't explain.

This event with the Hindu Avatara happened 9 years previous to the time of the interview and was a pivotal moment in P2 spiritual life as he became more open to religion and spirituality.

P2 realizes his own free association linking the intentional use of the clouds image in his emptiness meditation with his own perception of the Hindu Avatara and the retreat master. These three events being related is an insight P2 has at the time of the interview.

P2 perceived the Hindu Avatara in a way different from his usual perception of people. P2 uses kinesthetic description, using an image of swirling energy to describe his perception of her.

P2 perceived both the retreat master and the Hindu Avatara in way different from other people. P2 represents and expresses his perception of both the retreat master and the Hindu Avatara using a kinesthetic visual metaphor of the Niagara falls. For him it was as if there was a sort of swirling energy around them which then dissolved into their heads. P2 recalls what the catholic theologians label as being recollected, indicating this would be the case of the retreat master and the hindu avatara, their experience of being would have qualitative different characteristics to those of ordinary beings. This impressed P2 in a way that provoked admiration and inspired him.

I: And that was the first time you met him?
 P2: Ye...No, that was when I sort of made...Declared the intention to myself, and probably being an extrovert to everybody else...I talked to... About... "I'm going to come back, I'm not going to come back to Summer Festival next year, I'm going to just save up my time and then come for the Snows Retreat".

Eighteen months later, that's what I did.

I: So that's from the impact of having seen him and reminding you of that experience?

P2: Yeah, yeah, I just...Yeah, I'm going to do it!

Which is interesting, I think the very first Summer Festival which would have been the year before that, someone introduced me to him and, you know, it was nice and we're both psychologists and things like that

but it was seeing him, feeling him teach in that role the next year that...that...I got it.

I: And what was it? That?

P2: Just the sort of...The great ocean of being in which he lived.

I: And you thought that by engaging in retreat you could come to experience something similar or come closer to that experience that you say you felt in a way? Or?

P2: See, that allowed me then to connect up with all this...All the testimonials I had from the other...

Because I lived just outside of Toronto and when I connected with the New Kadampa it was a little bit like arriving at a party where people said "Oh! We just had the greatest guest and he's just left", you know? And there's a sense in the room of his or her presence but he's not actually there and that's how it was in....I got connected with the NKT...I think it was 2000 and I took my first weekend Empowerment on Je Tsongkhapa and Heart Jewel in the September and he, Tarchin had left to go

*P2 felt inspired by the retreat master's way of being in such a way that he decided to engage in long retreat (4 months) under his guidance the following year. In order to do this P2 had to prioritize his life and miss out on things he valued, this P2 did in order to then engage in retreat.

P2 admits that the very first time he actually met the retreat master was in a Buddhist international event with public teachings, the first he had ever attended. At that time P2 was not too impressed by the retreat master although he felt positive about shared characteristics (like the fact they were both psychologists).

What did impact P2 about the retreat master was seeing him perform in the role of the spiritual guide. P2 then became aware that the retreat master had an experience of being in the world qualitatively different from most, one that was perceived by P2 to be better.

*This recognition that the retreat master had a qualitatively different experience of being in the world, a more pleasant one, allowed P2 to relate to all the positive things he had heard from other practitioners about the retreat master.

Previous to meeting the retreat master P2 had heard much about him from other practitioners who lived and attended the Buddhist centre in his home town. P2 was very curious about the retreat master and had the expectation the retreat master was an extraordinary person from what he had heard from others. For P2 the retreat master's presence could be felt even if he was not physically there due to the fact that people spoke much about him and cherished him much.

<p>back to Scotland that September but I heard all the stories about him, so that was...</p>	<p>P2 only got involved with the Buddhist tradition after the retreat master had left the country where P2 lives.</p>
<p>So having that experience two or three years later helped me then connect</p>	<p>It wasn't until three years later that P2 had a chance to have a personal experience of what he had heard before and this allowed him to feel connected to the retreat master in a more personal way.</p>
<p>I knew what a powerful teacher he was. Twenty two people were ordained in Toronto in his seven years there and...</p>	<p>For P2 the retreat master is a very powerful spiritual teacher. An external indicator of this for P2 is the fact that over the seven years the retreat master spent teaching in P2's home town twenty two people got ordained as Buddhist monks or nuns.</p>
<p>Yes! What I said is he was a Mother Mira that talks! Because Mother Mira would not talk and when he talked he was this most obeying, amusing man, you know? New Yorker. Just, you know? Immensely...Immensely warm and intelligent...</p>	<p>At first P2 perceived the retreat master to have the same qualities of emotional warmth as the Hindu Avatara. But there was more to the retreat masters than the gift of presence, he would also engage in verbal communication which was much appreciated by P2. P2 saw in him also other qualities such as intelligence, charm and warmth. For P2 the retreat master had different qualities valued by him coming also from the fact that he was a masculine figure.</p>
<p>So, yeah! That's interesting how my spontaneous association just has you reminded me of my mother. My mother was an introverted feeling type but she wasn't intuitive, she was a sensing type. She couldn't say very much and things and so Tarchin has this, you know? As I say this wild imagination that I just admire.</p>	<p>In a free association fashion P2 links up the presence of the researcher to that of his own mother. This insight leads him to reflect on the perceived similarities between his mother and the Hindu Avatara, the motherly warmth and the lack of verbalization as main means for communication. On the other hand the retreat master embodied this emotional warmth combined with an ability to communicate verbally and being eloquent in a poetic creative way that P2 could relate to. P2 perceived the retreat master to possess some qualities as Mother Mira (the Hindu Avatar) and his own mother, being an introverted feeling type but also different ones given that he would be intuitive rather than sensitive, which he much appreciated.</p>
<p>I: And the experience of being on retreat under his guidance? P2: Sorry? I: The experience of being on retreat under his guidance? How was that?</p>	<p>*For P2 the experience of being under the retreat master's guidance while on retreat was completely safe. P2 trusted the retreat master and felt safe in the retreat centre-s environment.</p>

P2: Oh! Absolutely! It's completely safe there, I feel very safe, yeah. And don't have...you know?

As you know I think I had my solitary there which was three years ago. I went up after the Spring Festival, did the retreat, it was on the Medicine Buddha and then stayed for eighteen days solitary retreat. I saw him at the beginning and actually...Yeah there was something that came up, I think about six days in, and so I saw in then

and then it was actually Shri who did my debriefing at the end because he was called away to...Those days they were looking to buy a Centre up in Loch Lomond, he was involved in negotiations so he wasn't there (pause)

but it didn't really matter that he wasn't there, it's the frame work and the atmosphere of love that... I mean, the so called Tharpaland Managers, I mean, they are so loving because they feel loved so it's all the same energy in a way...

I: That team?

P2: Uhum, yeah...that's right.

I: When you say something comes up in retreat (he looks lost and surprised) because something came up and you wanted to...

P2: Yeah...

I: What is it like?

P2: Well, it was like when the mind goes...Can go crazy (laughter). Nothing really out of control in the sense of one's total being but the mind sort of...Wondering what to do with the thoughts, you know?

Oppressive thoughts.

I haven't talked about my experience much with other people, whether that's what goes on for them...

Oh yeah! Paul mentioned (laughter) going

Previously P2 engaged in an eighteen day solitary retreat in the same retreat centre with the supervision of the same retreat master. P2 met with the retreat master at the beginning of the retreat for guidance. P2 also met with the retreat master during the retreat (six days after it started) when he encountered difficulties and needed guidance once again in order to overcome the difficulty he had encountered.

As P2 finished his retreat it was another ordained practitioner resident in the retreat centre and one of the managers who met him to offer assistance for him to come out of retreat. The retreat master couldn't be present due to commitments which P2 recognizes as valid reasons.

Although P2 would have liked if the retreat master had been there himself he finds the retreat centre's managers to have the same energy as the retreat master, there is coherence, and he has confidence in them all. P2 recognizes good qualities in them and perceives them as being so loving because they feel so loved by the retreat master. P2 recognizes love to be the common quality between the managers and the retreat master.

*On retreat P2 experiences difficult moments at times. These are characterized by a sense of partial loss of control over his mental experience. This is experienced as being uncomfortable and painful although it does not cause P2 to be unable to function in the world. P2 mainly experiences oppressive thoughts and is not entirely sure how to relate to them.

P2 hasn't discussed much his experience with fellow retreaters and wonders if they might have similar experiences.

P2 recalls a fellow retreaters, a lay Buddhist

down, we drove down together, his first retreat...no, someone asked him...that was neat! Because this all was disclosed as I just sat silently, I should keep my mouth shut more because interesting stuff comes out, as you know as a therapist, they asked him about "How did you get into being the cook at Tharpaland?" He said "Well, I came up about seven years ago and I hated the food". (Laughter) But he wasn't saying in it as something...He said "I spoiled my whole retreat, it's like I just let my mind go at that and it was like..." Oh! You know...and he said "And I decided it was a waste, this was a terrible waste and I resolved to not do it again when I came back." And...And...He said "I didn't do it at a different retreat." And I'm not sure if it was at the end of that second one that, anyway, the person who...Who was cooking decided to quit. (Laughter) So... So he decided to do it! So, you know, so obviously other people get preoccupied with things

and this was one of the good things about this retreat. I realized there was a sense in which I was favoring my delusions or my distractions rather at previous times and it was like I could catch myself this time. I was kind of allowing my mind to play with them so I just kind of in a more straightforward way was able to come back or ...

Yeah, one...The only really strong obsessional thoughts I had was actually my last day on my solitary this time. I decided to go do the ring-walk two hour and all of us...Yeah...I just got preoccupied with the fact that the bed and breakfast... I couldn't recall that they had confirmed on my e-mail, there was a confirmation over the phone and I gave my credit card and it was interesting but I was able to sort of like...It was quite a driven thought but I...I didn't get...I couldn't control it but I didn't get so upset by it and

practitioner who currently lives in the retreat centre and performs the job of the cook. This practitioner when attending his first ever long winter retreat hated the food. This thought became rather obsessive and the practitioner recognized his own responsibility in allowing this thought to be in his mind for the whole duration of the retreat experience. Also he acknowledges his own obsessive thoughts were the cause of his suffering during the retreat and ruined the experience of retreat for him. Later this practitioner decided not to let that happen again because he found that he had wasted his time entertaining such thoughts. P2 acknowledges being aware of other people also having difficulties while on retreat and experiencing recurring thoughts of preoccupation with meaningless things which cause them distress.

On the Lamrim retreat P2 became aware that he was favoring his delusions and distractions. This contrasted with previous experiences in which he was not so aware, thus he could observe through indicators that his level of self awareness had improved. P2 was pleased he could monitor himself better. P2 was also pleased about the fact that he had more control over his mind when he realizes he was engaging in distractive thoughts. P2 was more confident than before and allowed himself to experiment with his own mind how far he could go and what distractions did to his mind. P2 was better able to reverse the process of getting involved in distractive thoughts.

P2 experienced having an obsessional thought of great intensity during his two day solitary retreat after the group retreat. Although P2 couldn't control this thought completely it didn't disturb him as much suggesting a contrast with previous experiences.

then half way through the walk it just disappeared and...And then when I came back next day and we could talk I just said "Can I call?" (Laughter)...It was like, Oh! ...and yeah there was a... And at the time I said "Chris, you know, this is..." Yeah...

So, it was helpful to do the meditation because this was the end of my meditation on the me, it's like so, you know, you're going to have...You're going to be preoccupied with your discomfort because what does it mean, you know, you won't have a place to lie, you won't have...You're going to be uncomfortable, so... So, anyway, it was helpful to see my mind...How I was attached to my comfort, because that's basically what the anxiety about the bed and breakfast was.

I: So not only you were more aware of the thoughts that were going on through your mind, but you were able to relate to them in a different way?

P2: Exactly, yes! Yeah, the secondary or tertiary elaboration of it was different.

I: Was that part of what you do when you're on retreat?

P2: I think that's one of the opportunities, it's to really kind of look...Look at your reactions...Yeah...

And I suppose the role of the Retreat Master or person is to create that frame work, both in terms of what they communicate in their presence but also in their instructions.

Because what was helpful was...Tarchin just quoting Geshe-la saying...Yeah, "Distractions are the greatest obstacle to spiritual realizations because they feed your mind to your delusions" or something to that effect. And come of "Wow!"...OK, so there's that very strict relationship between distractions and delusions so I thought "Hum, well I'll put more effort into...Into not playing with them, not entertaining them."

As a strategy to cope with his anxiety P2 found it helpful to engage in the meditation of the emptiness of the I to directly address the obsessional thought. From monitoring his mind P2 identified that what was causing the anxiety of the obsessional thought was his attachment to being comfortable, preoccupation with the "I". P2 chose to meditate on the emptiness of the "I" to reduce that anxiety.

*P2 could then relate to his obsessional thoughts differently, specifically the secondary or tertiary elaboration and he recognized the opportunity he had on retreat to look and observe his reactions.

For P2 the role of the retreat master is to create a frame of work which allows retreaters to look at themselves with greater insight. For P2 the retreat master does this both verbally and non verbally: by what he communicates with his presence and through his instructions.

P2 found the retreat master's instruction helpful during the retreat to address his distractions. The instruction consisted on quoting the spiritual guide of the tradition (main teacher holder of the lineage). P2 came to apply more effort into not engaging in distractions because of the perceived strict relationship between these and delusions (the undesired negative and distorted states of mind which are the cause of suffering) and perceived them as great obstacles to attaining spiritual realizations leading to inner peace and happiness.

<p>I: So what did you do when they were arising? Like any distraction? I imagine you'd have some during your retreat...</p> <p>P2: Oh, I did. I certainly did, certainly did. Yes, I would... Well it was helpful coming back to that image of the...The...That picture of Tarchin when he talked about the Spiritual Guide. I'd just come back to that and it kind of softened, softened the mind...</p> <p>I: It's time for us to finish...Would you like to say anything before we finish?</p> <p>P2: Not really, I'd just like to thank you, I love talking about this stuff and it's a great opportunity.</p> <p>I: It's been great listening and learning from you.</p> <p>P2: Thank you.</p> <p>I: Thank you.</p>	<p>*The strategy P2 used to deal with the distractions that arose in his mind was to recall the image of the retreat master talking about the spiritual guide and this would ease the difficulty for him.</p> <p>*P2 loves talking about retreat and recognizes the research interview to be a great opportunity to do just this.</p>
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Participante 3

Meaning Units	Psychological Meaning
<p>I: So, can you tell me how it was for you, the experience of being on this meditation retreat?</p> <p>P3: It was good, it was very good, I felt it was...</p> <p>Things made sense...Do you want a sort of specific example of something that...?</p> <p>I: Yeah.</p> <p>P3: Maybe two or three years ago I'd seen a television program about alternative medicines and in that they were looking at the placebo effect. Well, one of the studies was in America, and it was people that had bad knees. The other group...They'd split them into three. Each person went into surgery and when they went into the operating room, the surgeon would open an envelope. One of the groups did not get a new knee and the surgeon didn't see anything. He just showed up within the operating theater what was written on the card and they then played a video of an operation going ahead and the surgeon cut the person's leg open as if they had had a new knee, asked for all the right equipment</p>	<p>P3 feels positively about her experience on retreat.</p> <p>While on retreat P3 found new meanings for things she had experienced previous to engaging on retreat. A specific example of such is that P3 P3 could understand the power of the mind to a different extent, having new insight as to the placebo effect processes for example. For P3 it is clear that the mind has immeasurable power and abilities and that it is only due to lack of knowledge that people cannot make use of its full potential.</p>

at the right times, etc. And it was two years later that the people were actually told that they hadn't had a new knee operation. The person who was doing the programme interviewed one of the people that hadn't had a new knee operation and it was an experiment and he said that, you know, it was seven years ago and he had no problems, his knee was fine. Before the operation he could hardly walk on his knee, after the operation it was great. And, you know, I kept thinking, you know, I know the mind is powerful, I believe that it's... You know? We're using like 0.1 of a percent of what it's capable of but I still kept finding it difficult, you know? How can the mind fix something physical that's wrong, like bones? You know, I could understand with other things that were wrong but, you know, to bones that are damaged how can the mind fix those?

And being on retreat and, you know, we start talking about Emptiness. Suddenly it dawned at me, off course the mind can, because the body is not wholly there, it's just a perception, off course the mind can heal bones that appears, you know, something solid. So the thing is, you know, that... That was... Was just like a kind of whole new awareness that...

I was having a wee (*little) walk myself and I started going "Yeah! Off course! That's how, that's why it works!" It was a great feeling of realizing that I couldn't explain this.

I: So how did it feel, having that insight?

P3: Really, really good.

But being able, not so much being able to explain that thing but sort of, well, understand a tiny thing, a wee bit of what Venerable Tarchin is talking about. About inherent existence, you know? That's

On retreat P3 resolved an internal conflict she had when although recognizing the mind to be very powerful she could not understand its mechanisms, on retreat P3 had a new awareness of these. P3's internal conflict was resolved through a new interpretation of things according to the teaching on emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomenon. P3 could then understand that although things appear to exist from their own side they exist in dependence of the mind that imputes them as being certain phenomena and thus the mind played a big role in the creation of reality. In particular P3 could understand how the mind could heal the body due to belief in the power of a placebo medicine.

P3-s new insight that helped her make sense of the world according to the teaching of emptiness came about as she was going for a walk on her own. P3 much enjoyed having this new insight although she could not entirely grasp the whole meaning of this new awareness.

P3 wasn't able yet to explain emptiness herself, she had only begun to comprehend a little more about the teaching on emptiness. However she knew she had started to understand the retreat master- teaching on

actually starting to make a wee bit of sense to me and it felt good, you know?

It's made me want to really kind of consolidate more my study, my meditation, you know? Make a bit of an effort so that I can understand a lot more.

I: And all of that because you were having a personal experience of what the teachings during the retreat were?

P3: Yes. Yes.

I: So do you think that happened through your meditation? Through your experience of being on the retreat meditation?

P3: Yes. Yes. Yes, definitely. Yes, obviously.

You know what? I wasn't aware that I was thinking anything about that programme but it was obviously there somewhere, you know? In my mind. And it just, you know, obviously came to the fore (*front) at some point during the meditation and... You know? But yeah, it was... That made sense, I understand it now...

I: So that happened during one meditation?

P3: No, no. It wasn't during the meditation. It was just after, just when...

Because normally when we'd finish the meditation session I'd go and have a wee walk before going back to the house, and it was on... Just there when I left and it was... Only, you know, a five minute walk so it was just after that and... So, no, it wasn't actually during the meditation. It was a short while after I'd been for a walk.

You know I'm starting to understand, obviously I know a tiny, tiny wee percentage on the big scheme of things but at least when you get that wee insight and that helps, encourages you. (Laughter)

I: I can imagine that from what you are

the subject of emptiness and this brought about a shift in her understanding of the world and phenomena. P3 felt extremely positive about this.

The improved intellectual understanding of the teaching on emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomenon, and the positive feeling this brought about motivated P3 to apply more effort in her study and meditation in order to improve and understand even more.

*For P3 an important aspect that contributed to her new awareness and insight was having a personal experience of what was being taught in the retreat through her own process of being an active participant, engaging in the meditations and bringing her life experience into it.

During the meditation sessions on emptiness P3 would engage in the object actively as guided by the retreat master. Out of the sessions and at some point in the retreat the new awareness that she had being working on became available in her mind leading her to interpret past experience according to the teaching on emptiness, the ultimate nature of phenomenon.

P3 had the habit of going for short five minute walk after the retreat sessions and before going back to her accommodation. It was during one of this walks that P3 had the insight about how the teaching on emptiness could help her understand and make sense of the placebo effect and the power of the mind. From that point onwards P3 could understand what previously had puzzled her. For P3 the retreat teachings and her personal life/experience previous from retreat became integrated.

P3 gained a new level of understanding on retreat by listening to teachings, contemplating and meditating on them. She also brought her personal experience into it integrating the teachings into her understanding of the world. P3 felt she had

saying.
P3: Yes.

I: So do you think that the experience of being on retreat has made you, because you said that suddenly things made sense, so are there other things that started making sense with the experience you were having on the retreat? Such as the example you've just given?

P3: That was the main thing I remember. I know there were some other smaller things but I can't...

I: That was the one that influenced you?

P3: Yes, Uhu. Yes, you know the other things at the time were significant but now they've sort of faded to the background and I know they were...You know, I know they were silly wee things that, you know, you thought "Oh, yeah. All right."

But...I remember when...We were discussing how inherent existence, didn't exist...how things didn't...Didn't have a name... Didn't inherently exist and we were in groups discussing about it...Somebody was talking about a seed. You know, a seed can't inherently exist because it sprouts and grows into a plant and you know? So if it was plant then were has the seed gone and...That, that was quite a good treat. That was a good example. To start trying to understand things.

I: And that was during a talk with other people?

P3: Yeah.

I: Had you come out of silence?

P3: No, no, no. It was actually during one of the sessions. We were put into groups and told that we could talk just during...Just in groups and it was trying to...To...It was looking at how the world would be if things inherently existed...Right...hum...You know, up to that point... You know... You just, except what you think you see. You know of course, you know that trees there, there is a tree there, it's not a wee something that materialized. Oh, no...You know...if there was a tree there then there would always be a tree...Hum...So...It was just there just a sort of a wee thing that during the discussion,

improved her level of understanding on the subject of emptiness and this encouraged her to further her spiritual training.

*On retreat there were several other things that P3 had experienced previous to engaging in retreat that now interpreted and made sense of in a way that pleased and suited her better than before. However P3 considers them minor things compared to the example she described of the placebo effect.

P3 engaged in debate in groups on the subject of emptiness, the lack of inherent existence of phenomena. The debates contributed for the improvement of her understanding and she much enjoyed tis interaction with fellow retreaters. Specif if examples given during the debate to practically explain emptiness helped her to further understand the subject.

*During the retreat although the group would be observing silence they would engage in group discussion during an allocated part of some sessions. P3 engaged in these group debates discussing with fellow retreaters specific examples of the teachings delivered during the retreat sessions. P3 and the group used imagination and logical reasoning to get a personal experience of the teachings in order to come to a personal conclusion about their validity.

that I thought "Yes, yes! Helps explain things".

I: Wow, so how was that? Trying to... During the discussion trying to...Imagine things or see them as being inherently existent and how the world would be, so it was kind of ?....

P3: It, it... It was mind blowing... Mind blowing for me because I was with a group of mainly ordained people....Right...And the other two that weren't ordained...You know.. Had both been involved for years. Some of the things that were then said were just...(laughter) "OK, that's gone right over my head"... But... But no, it was, it was a really good discussion and... ..

It was just so much that you don't think about until somebody says then it makes perfect sense...You know?...If we were inherently existent...we wouldn't be able to move we wouldn't be able to do anything.....Nothing would move. Because it would be solid it would be there...It was just mind blowing.

I: So it seems like it was really personal, you were given a teaching and then you were really taking...

P3: Yes, yes it was from that point the retreat was good, because there was a wee teaching and then a meditation afterwards, and...

So the way it was done you had time in the meditation, to really think about things... Personal to you, you know, you were given pointers and given time just to think about it and relate, you know, It to your own thoughts relate to your own life, or to other things you were thinking about, that was... That was good.

I: And how was that experience of having... I'm thinking of what you're saying about having a teaching and then a meditation, and sort of being organised, your time being organised, when you're on retreat...

P3: It's good...

I mean I've never done a solitary retreat...

But no there wasn't to much just three

*For P3 the group debates helped her expand her understanding by listening to different people whom she recognized as being experienced explain and look at reality from different angles. P3 engaged in group debates with very experienced practitioners, both ordained and lay. P3 couldn't understand all of what was being discussed and enjoyed this level of debate that would challenge her usual view of the world and phenomena.

P3 became aware there were many things she had never questioned before this experience of debate. The way they were presented to her by fellow retreaters made sense and allowed her to explore a new perception of the world and phenomena, specifically according to the teaching on emptiness.

*P3 enjoyed the retreat programme: there would be a teaching followed by a meditation in the retreat sessions.

During the retreat sessions the meditations were guided by the retreat master. P3 had time during the meditation to engage in contemplation also relating personal experience to what had been said and she was given pointers (by the retreat master) to encourage her do this. P3 felt positively about this.

P3 has never engaged in solitary retreat.

P3 didn't consider 3 sessions a day to be too

sessions a day. Yeah, three sessions a day but yes it was good because He was discussing...He was telling us something, explaining something and then I would say that the meditation session followed it...

And he was...He was guiding us through the meditation but he was giving you time to have time to follow the direction you wanted to follow and I found that very... Very...

Useful. Because it would...Maybe because I haven't been doing meditation for that long my mind wanders a lot and with continual...With him, you know, giving you a wee while, you know, saying something else it... I found it kept me a lot more focused. Quite often I can't be.

I: So it was, it felt good that you had that guidance...

P3: Yes, yes, definitely, it suited me

I: So how did it feel being on a retreat guided by a Retreat Master, I wonder how that relationship was?

P3: Very special because I spent quite a bit of time up at Tharpaland and it's not that far away.

I suppose I've seen Venerable Tarchin lots of times and think he is a very special person and it was lovely that being able to have the opportunity to spend time with him.

OK, I do not have a lot of people to compare him with but I think I really enjoy his teachings and I find that most of the time I can follow what he is saying. He's not talking about things and I will switch off because I don't understand what he's saying here.

He's very, very, very special but it's lovely to be able to spend the time to be on retreat with such a good Meditation Master.

I: Is that why you feel he's very special to you, the teachings? And what do you think makes him, how do you feel that he is special to you personally?

P3: I think probably because the night that I spoke about Roger and??? were going down

much. P3 enjoyed the layout of the retreat: teaching followed by meditation.

P3 was guided through the meditation by the retreat master and she was given the time to follow the direction she wanted to follow in her meditation in order to make it personal. For P3 this was useful. P3 is not an experienced meditator and her mind wanders much and she felt more focused under the guidance of the retreat master while engaging in meditation.

*For P3 it was very special being under the guidance of this particular retreat master and in this particular retreat centre. P3 spends much time there since she lives close to it.

P3 considers the retreat master to be a very special person and much appreciated the opportunity to spend time with him.

P3 enjoys this retreat master's teachings as she finds she can understand and relate to them.

Although P3 has no comparison standards since she does not know many other teachers or hasn't attended their teachings this does not trouble her.

For P3 the retreat master is an extremely special person and she feels positively about being able to spend time with him. P3 recognizes the retreat master's competence as a meditation master.

*P3 recognized the retreat master to be a very special person since she met him and this recognition has been positively affected by the time she has spent with him. P3 felt connected to the retreat master since she met him, she felt she could relate to him and

<p>to look after Tharpaland when they went to America I had meet them before: no. had I?: no, I hadn't met them up till that point but that night at supper I was sitting beside them and we sat and spoke for quite a while and there was just something that night that I just got a real connection with them and just felt it was very special since then seeing a lot more of them.</p>	<p>there was a bond between them</p>
<p>It was just everything about them, his teachings were good. I've heard him teaching various stuff in places. I was going to the GP at Tharpaland and occasionally at retreats.</p>	<p>P3 finds the retreat master to be special also because of his teachings. P3 has attended the retreat master's teachings many times in different locations. P3 attended generic and introductory Buddhist meditation classes and occasionally she engaged in retreats.</p>
<p>He always seems to have time for people, you know, some times he must really be tired and just, you know, want to go (laughter). He always seems to have time</p>	<p>P3 finds the retreat master special also because he always seems to have time for people despite being very tired, she recognizes him to be compassionate and loving towards others overcoming self concern.</p>
<p>and, you know, he makes you feel special. He's got that knack I: That is very special indeed. (Laughter)</p>	<p>For P3 the retreat master makes people feel special and has special qualities himself.</p>
<p>And in general the retreat conditions that you have how do you experience that the whole setting? P3: I think you know there's something about Tharpaland that is just wonderful I think that's what makes it special. It's not somewhere that's been built as a Retreat Centre, you know, it's evolved so that everything is different.</p>	<p>*P3 recognizes the retreat centre as having special qualities which contributes to her experience being special. P3 acknowledges it has not been built as a retreat centre but rather evolved into that so it is different from other retreat centres.</p>
<p>I tend to go for single accommodation because I find it difficult sleeping with, you know, with noises in the room with others sleeping in. I've slept in various different accommodations. I have also slept in a dorm and its great and I must...</p>	<p>P3 usually chooses single accommodation when staying at the retreat centre because she has difficulties sleeping. P3 has slept in single accommodation and shared dormitories and she feels positively about both. For P3 the conditions in general are very good.</p>
<p>Before I would have gotten involved in a different relative sense given a choice give me a five star hotel I like my comforts I must admit quite happy being down there and doing a retreat before it was in a caravan but the shower was not working so you had to get up in the morning put some clothes on</p>	<p>P3's view of accommodation conditions has changed after getting involved in Buddhism. Before P3 needed more comforts and now she will happily endure worse conditions.</p>

and go down to the shower block get a shower and back up I was quite happy doing that, it didn't bother me.

I: Is it because of what you are doing there that's worth having those conditions because you said giving a choice before you would have preferred a five star hotel?

P3: Yes!

I: So it seems that the experience you have there whole experience

P3: Yes, yes. I probably... If it had, you know, if it was going down to, I don't know, to do something else I can't think what in particular but would be just...For the weekend away or something I would probably feel "Oh, thanks!"

But, yes, I think it is the whole experience its just a special place and, you know, down there even if it's going to be doing a Puja at night, whatever, or obviously doing your own practice, you know, you are meditating at some point.

Yes, I think that does make a big difference. I think that if that wasn't going on there and it was a holiday resort, you know, it wouldn't, it wouldn't feel the same definitely not.

I: And what does... how does it feel because I'm kind of wondering with all of these conditions, your mentioning being silent and having your own private accommodation and what goes on for you while you are engaging in this activity and the whole experience of doing all that and being sort of...

P3: I think looking at my own feelings and emotions and how I'm dealing with things and why, you know...

For example the relationships with other people, you know? I look at how that relationship is not good you know? Why is it not good? And OK, yes I can understand because of things that have happened in the past maybe that's why I feel that way and I then try and turn it around. Ideally that's what

*The shift that occurred in P3's experience so that she does not value comfort as she used to as to do with a change in the meaning she attributes to her activity while staying at the retreat centre.

P3 values the activity of engaging in retreat as a meaningful one. The attributed meaningfulness is what enables P3 to overlook her need for more comfortable conditions.

For P3 the whole experience of being in this retreat centre has special qualities to it. P3 feels positively about going there for whatever reason as long as she engages in some form of Buddhist meditation practice. For P3 the common theme is that if she goes to this retreat centre no matter what takes her there she will engage in meditation at some point whether in group or individually.

P3 would feel differently about the retreat centre's conditions if her purpose for going there was to go on holiday. Once again it is the attributed meaning that allows her to feel positively about the retreat centre's conditions.

*P3 on retreat engages in introspections, becoming more aware of her own feelings and emotions. P3 monitors herself and further analyses how she relates to and copes with things and her motivation to do so.

While on retreat P3 contemplates on the quality of her relationships with other people. In case they are not perceived as positive P3 analyses and contemplates the reason for such. P3 tries to interpret and make sense of these difficult relationships considering that the cause for her present difficulties lies in

you want to do, not quite that easy but in theory that...

That a lot of the time is what I'm trying to do, you know? Just to look at things within one life and try to understand them a bit more to get the right perspective on them.

If you're feeling angry with someone that happened years ago just accept that it's happened and that's it and move on. Realize that the only person I'm harming is myself and I think...

I think you need this space and the time to do that, you know? I think to say to people that "Well you should look at that relationship and, you know, understand what's gone wrong with it". You can't do that when you're involved in a busy life. You need to have time out.

OK, you can do it on your own a wee bit each day meditating, yes, but if you can have time to just go away for a few days or a week or longer then that's the special thing about it, you have got time to kind of look at things,

past actions. P3 also used this understanding of cause and effect (karma) to make sense of and interpret the way she feels. P3 tries to change the quality of her experience of being by working through her emotions and difficulties in order to experience more positive emotions and thoughts. For P3 this is not easy to put into practice although she is quite certain it is the right method to address her issues.

P3 often works through her difficulties making sense of things only within the context of one lifetime (as opposed to the basic Buddhist view that considers the existence of past and future lives) and trying to get a positive perspective on them.

On retreat P3 copes with her feelings of anger towards somebody resulting from a situation that happened years before. P3 copes with this by accepting the situation as it is (instead of entertaining counterfactual thoughts thinking that things should or could have been different to what they actually are) and lets go of her expectations along with the anger associated to them. P3's motivation is related to realizing that by entertaining feelings of anger towards others or situations she brings harm only on herself.

On retreat P3 finds the conditions necessary to contemplate analyze and cope with difficult situations learning and training a new way to relate to them. P3 needs the time and space to engage in this line of thought and go through this process. For P3 it is impossible at present to analyze things in her own life and relationships and see them from a different perspective due to being too involved in the situation or too distracted with other activities. P3 feels the need to take a break from her daily life and temporarily distance herself from the relationships she wants to observe so that she can adopt different perspectives, angles. P3 thinks this to be beneficial for everybody.

For P3 there are benefits to engaging in meditation practice on her own every day even if not for too long. However she acknowledges the greater benefit of taking time out and going away for a period of time

look at relationships, look at your life and have time to really examine it and not be distracted or if you do, you go back to it, not run away from things

I: And how is that when you get distracted how does it happen?

P3: Dead easily. Somebody walks by and you sort of think "Oh! Who is that?" Your mind is...

Sometimes you maybe looking at something that you don't want to look at, because it's painful, because...you know? That you're in the wrong and you don't like admitting it so your mind thinks about something else and, you know, you just go wondering of in a direction that's a lot more pleasant to think about

I: And what are you doing?

P3: You have got to go back to what you don't want to think about and just try and just keep working away at it.

I say that's a good thing about a retreat, probably most of the meditation. Just doing meditation on your own if you're on a retreat you can't run away from things easily because it will just keep coming back until you deal with it and you have got the time to deal with it

and once you have dealt with things you do feel better for it. There is no doubt about it and definitely do.

I: So how does it feel when you say you have the time and the space and the

that can vary from only a few days to a week or longer.

The benefits P3 finds are>

having the time to engage in reflection and contemplation on things, relationships, one's own life,
and having the time to examine these without distractions and without escapes.

*P3 gets distracted easily. For P3 the sources of distractions can be sensorial stimuli or internal stimuli.

When observing in her own consciousness something that was painful to become aware of and address P3 experienced allowing herself to be distracted by other thoughts as an escape strategy. For P3 an example of this was when she tried to admit to herself that she had engaged in inappropriate behavior. In such occasions her mind would follow other thoughts, more pleasant ones to hold. This happened in order to avoid experiencing difficult emotions that she admits promote growth.

*P3 deals with such difficulties by then refocusing her attention on the process of analyzing her inappropriate behavior. P3 thus continues to engage in the process ignoring the distractive thoughts that functioned as an escape.

For P3 engaging in meditation is one of the major benefits of retreat. When engaging in meditation during retreat she has face whatever difficulties she might encounter because they will not cease until she has dealt with them and she must overcome them on her own. On retreat P3 has the opportunity and necessary conditions such as time to go through this process.

Once P3 finds a coping strategy to overcome her difficulties while on retreat she feels more positive about her experience and there is some closure to whatever was disturbing her previously. P3 is certain this method of facing her difficulties and working through them on retreat brings good results since she has personal experience doing this.

*The quality of P3's experience of being while on retreat improves qualitatively as she

<p>opportunity to deal with these things and also experiences that you bring from your daily life and arise in your retreat and maybe not...Some of them may not be that pleasant like your saying. So how does it affect you when you then go out of retreat back to your daily life? P3: You take...You take some of that peace and that calm with you</p>	<p>experiences higher levels of inner peace and calmness. This extends into her experience of daily life even if with less intensity. After going out of retreat and returning to her daily life P3-s experience is therefore positively affected by having engaged in retreat.</p>
<p>and I know that I've a few relationships that have changed and got better because I have spent the time thinking about it; and thinking about that it's wrong and turned it around so it's a positive...A real positive affect in your life, you know?</p>	<p>P3 has improved a few of her relationships through changes she brought about on herself during periods when she engaged in retreat. While on retreat P3 spent time reflecting about these relationships. For P3 doing this had a real positive effect in her life.</p>
<p>That you go back and sometimes, yes, it's very easy to go back into old ways but hopefully you can remind yourself that...That's bad. That's the wrong way.</p>	<p>P3 acknowledges the danger of falling into old mental and behavioral patterns when returning to her daily life out of retreat. P3's strategy to overcome this is to continuously remind herself of the downfalls of such patterns to put her off from repeating them.</p>
<p>I know what I need to do and, you know, if you do change your attitude when you go back your life gets better, you know?</p>	<p>P3 is aware of what she must accomplish in order to improve the quality of her experience of being. P3 acknowledges this involves changing her attitude in her daily life after having trained in retreat.</p>
<p>You improve, you know, it's not going to change dramatically over night but you improve.</p>	<p>P3 is aware changing her mental patterns and behaviors is a process that will require time. P3 is also aware it would be unrealistic of her to expect quick results so she refrains from focusing on outcomes but rather on continuously applying effort on the process.</p>
<p>As I say there's a couple of relationships in particular that just by working at in my own head, my own mind, that they have improved because I have spent the time as I say thinking and meditating about it. I: So what happened when you met that person with that situation again? Was it the situation as you were saying...As I think you were saying was now different but you had worked on your mind? P3: Yes, correct I: What happened then?? P3: The relationship with both people improved. They responded to my more positive attitude</p>	<p>P3's personal experience confirms her assumption that changing her attitude will improve the quality of her experience. P3's example is that a couple of relationships of hers have improved already because of the changes she brought about on herself, namely on her way of perceiving and interpretation the world and others. P3's relationships improved for her also because the other people involved responded better to her new and more positive approach. P3 acknowledges the role retreat played in this process and how it enabled her with the time to reflect and meditate.</p>

and one was actually my mum and we didn't have any serious problems but we weren't really that close; but we're now becoming very close; we are a lot closer

and the other was a problem that I had with a cousin that things had happened and it would be easy to say that she treated me very badly. She realized she did and she realized she hadn't handled things as well as she should have but I decided, you know, sort of worked at it with help from one of the nuns at Tharpaland. Thought "Right, OK. I'm going to deal with this myself." And thought "OK, we are not going to be great friends but at least, you know, we can communicate with each other; we will meet up at odd times."

I: So how did you...How did you...you said you worked on it, when you were at Tharpaland with this nun...So how did you do it? What exactly...

P3: By ...A lot of it was by sending loving compassion to her; that was the main thing. Keep thinking of her and sending her a lot of love and compassion. By continually doing that, that... My mind of anger did dispel.

We decided things got better. Think there is still a bit there, you know, if I'm honest but got rid of a tremendous amount of anger towards her. That was the main thing.

P3's relationship with her mother was one of the relationships that was improved especially in its quality of closeness. P3 and her mother are coming closer and the more positive attitude P3 now has contributed to this shift. P3's relationship with her mother was not characterized by any serious conflicts though .

In P3's relationship with her cousin there had been a conflict because of something her cousin had done to her and this was acknowledged by the cousin. P3 admits it would be easy to interpret the situation as the cousin having treated her very badly but this didn't make her feel any better. Thus P3 decided to improve the way she experienced this relationship. For this purpose P3 required the help of one of the ordained people from the retreat centre, a nun. There was a shift in P3's attitude as her perception of the situation being totally her cousin's responsibility changed. P3's perception of her control over her experienced changed as well and she decided to take responsibility for the quality of her experience. P3 set the goal of being able to communicate with her cousin although being aware they would not become great friends.

*P3 used the help of one the members of the retreat centre's spiritual community. This consisted of advice on specific meditations for her to engage on. P3 focused mainly on generating a wish that her cousin would be happy and free from suffering. P3 also focused on developing the wish she could herself deliver these results by visualizing herself sending loving compassion to her cousin.

By doing this continuously P3's anger at her cousin disappeared.

The quality of P3's relationship with her cousin improved and this opinion was shared by the both of them. Despite the improvement P3 still experiences a residue of the initial feeling of anger towards her cousin but the quality of their relationship as well as her personal experience of it has tremendously improved.

<p>Also just thinking about her good qualities. Realizing the harm I was doing to myself by being angry.</p> <p>The main, the main practice was continually sending love and compassion to her. That worked</p> <p>I: Great. I think we are about to finish. I wonder if there is anything else you would like to add before we finish... (Looks puzzled) About your experience in general. P3: Can't think of anything. I: Good. That's good too. Thank you so much, P3. P3: That's alright. I don't know how much of it will actually help. I: Oh! It's great.</p>	<p>P3's strategy to bring about changes on the way she perceived her cousin also consisted of > contemplating her cousin's good qualities, contemplating she was harming herself by being angry.</p> <p>P3's main strategy was developing a feeling of love (wishing her cousin to be happy) and compassion (wishing her cousin to be free from suffering) as explained before. For P3 this strategy was applied successfully as she monitored the improvement of the quality of her experience.</p> <p>*P3 has nothing to add to the interview and wonders if she was of any help.</p>
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Participante 4

Meaning Units	Psychological Meaning
<p>I: So, could you tell me, could you describe for me the experience of being on this Lamrim meditation retreat? P4: So basically my motivation was to get deeper into these topics which are for me very important, very essential.</p> <p>I made long retreats before in different topics</p> <p>and this is always one which I have very much association with, which I appreciate very much;</p> <p>which I know is very very very important and an initial...Yeah...You cannot hear it often enough! (laughter) So I was looking forward to the teachings of Venerable Tarchin and to this retreat again</p>	<p>P4's motivation to go on this retreat was deepen his experience of the Buddhist teachings of renunciation, Bodhichitta and emptiness which he acknowledges have great meaning to him.</p> <p>P4 is an experienced retreator and has engaged in long retreats both on this subject and others.</p> <p>For P4 doing retreat emphasizing meditation on renunciation, Bodhichitta and emptiness has great meaning and he enjoys it.</p> <p>P4 finds these teachings to be a foundation and he is therefore motivated to dedicate much time to listening to them repeatedly. P4 has listened to these teachings and engaged on retreat on them with this retreat master and was extremely motivated to do this once</p>

<p>and so one of the first experiences of this retreat was encouragement to take, from the renunciation for example, to take things really personal, to...I got this feeling of...</p>	<p>again.</p> <p>On retreat P4 felt encouraged to take the Buddhist teachings as personal advice and relate them to his personal subjective experience. An example of this for P4 is practice of renouncing Samsara - the cycle of death and rebirth contaminated by self-grasping ignorance and therefore pervaded by suffering.</p>
<p>To emphasize this more because...especially renunciation you can deal with it very intellectually so...</p>	<p>For P4 it is especially important that he applies this teaching practically to his life. P4 is aware that if he keeps only an intellectual understanding of the teachings of renunciation these will not affect his personal experience of being.</p>
<p>So I was thinking about 5 aggregates or "I have to abandon 5 aggregates" and I think "Yeah, but these aggregates are this, this and this, OK." So you make the decision and you...You make it on a more intellectual level ...</p>	<p>On retreat P4 trained himself continuously. On an intellectual level he understood the object of renunciation, the object to be abandoned and made his personal decision to abandon it. Then P4 proceeded to identify this object of abandonment practically in his personal subjective experience. It is P4's experience that the decision to abandon Samsara is made on a more intellectual level and through training it becomes part of one's experience of being affecting the quality of one's experience, thoughts and emotions.</p>
<p>But it's a first topic, Renunciation as Venerable Tarchin also taught it, it was for me really emphasizing that I take into heart, that I truly...</p>	<p>From the retreat masters teachings P4 understood the importance of letting his understanding of the teachings affect his personal experience, taking them as personal advice and seek the practical application of them to his life, integrating Buddhist teachings with his personal experience.</p>
<p>The Renunciation is my life, is my contaminated life, my life, how I perceive things, how I perceive people, how I perceive beings, my way, my deluded way, my...</p>	<p>P4 identifies the renunciation object to be his current way of perceiving things and people. P4 recognizes this way to be in disagreement with the ultimate nature of reality. Thus, P4 renounces to his distorted view of reality and the suffering brought about by this.</p>
<p>So to renounce my Samsara, my Samsaric experience, my Samsaric world which is something that is in my intellect, something I know intellectually I should abandon but to feel it...Something...Is...Has to do with</p>	<p>P4 identifies the object of renunciation and has a wish to abandon it. However P4 is aware this wish is still somehow intellectual, it is not affecting the deeper levels of his consciousness.</p>

<p>something...Is that what I experience now, so the way I experience it now.</p>	<p>P4 still experiences a gap between what he knows intellectually and the way he feels; intellectually he knows he wants to abandon the object of renunciation but this is yet to affect his experience of feeling.</p>
<p>So this was one of the messages that especially it is, I felt especially in this retreat, that I have to welcome this, that I have to really, to see the connections, to seize its implications, of this connection and what it means for my practical life, so...So how I am dealing with this, not only intellectual but it influences really my behavior, my relations, my...Yeah...</p>	<p>P4, on this retreat, felt a need to be more open to practicing renunciation in a way that enables him to see the connections and seize the implications of renunciation practice for his practical life. P4 acknowledges that doing this in a way that goes beyond the intellectual level will influence his behavior and his relationships.</p>
<p>So, that was one of the, for me, one of the major points, to think of the implications it has not to really renounce, not to really have understand or take into heart what to renounce because it will only, for me to see, to feel, to take it to heart, it will only result in suffering because I don't really...I don't really point to the problems right now...</p>	<p>P4 reflected on: not renouncing his deluded way of perceiving reality, not understanding what the object of renunciation is, thus being unable to abandon it, not applying the correct understanding of the object to be abandoned to his experience. P4 concluded the result of all of the previous possibilities will be an experience of suffering. P4 is aware that at present his understanding does not affect his experience in a way that enables him to at all times identify the cause of his suffering and the object of renunciation.</p>
<p>When I work, when I still continue to work on these issues but really to see how it also creates by lacking this deep heartfelt wish, this heartfelt wish to renounce this situation that...</p>	<p>P4 understands that his experience of renunciation practice starts at an intellectual level but when it grows to affect his feelings then it will affect his whole experience of being. P4 identifies he needs to have an intellectual understanding of how he creates the suffering for his future lives and a spontaneous heartfelt wish to renounce this suffering, both combined will enable him achieve the desired outcome.</p>
<p>That I like to set...That I fail to set the right cause for my future lives, for these countless future lives. So it leads you to feel that it has really vast, vast, vast implications. So for the future what I am doing, what I am setting now, what I am...if I...</p>	<p>P4 is aware that by grasping at inherently existent self and phenomena he creates the cause for suffering in countless future lives. For P4 it is important what he does now in this life because his actions of the present (mental, verbal and physical) will determine his future experience in lives to come.</p>
<p>Yeah...Not fight to bring it to heart and keep</p>	<p>P4 emphasizes the importance of opening</p>

it in an intellectual level and not really live it. Live it in this way and felt it, feel it in this way,

so it does something with me, this topic...That I continue to create the causes for future suffering...Because it's ignorance, it's just ignorance when I abide in just this... It's just a grasping effect at... this is what there is now, but off course this is for me anyway,

this retreat was another topic, that...To overcome some resistance to make really sure that for me it's not just renouncing enjoyments, that's not the issue, but renouncing what enjoyment means to me, that I grasp at it as a source of happiness which is...Cannot function.

So, yeah, it was...It is interesting for me to see... For example I like some nice foods, some nice cakes or some nice things (laughter) and to see really what my mind does with the delicious curry of Paul (laughter) at lunch time and Basmati rice I: Cannot blame you for that... (laughter) P4: And the portions got naturally bigger (laughter) and...What happens? This...So, to see some of these things, to watch my mind, what it really means is that there is still a bit too much attachment there or...

Also to see that, off course, it does not say

up to integrating renunciation practice in his personal experience in a way that affects the whole of his experience of being, intellectually and emotionally.

P4's reflection on how the way his perception of reality and the consequent behaviors are the causes for his future experience of suffering moves him deeply. P4 identifies the main cause of his suffering to be his own ignorant perception that grasps at self and phenomena to exist inherently in the way they appear, which is opposite to the ultimate nature of reality.

On this retreat P4 worked on overcoming some resistance to integrating the renunciation practice into his experience. Also a part of this was that P4 trained in clearly identifying the object of renunciation, what it is that he is renouncing to and how to do so. P4 trained in recognizing the object of renunciation not as the objects of enjoyments but the meaning they have at present to him. P4 trained in renouncing the perceived meaning of objects of enjoyment as a true source of happiness because they cannot function as such, they only bring temporary happiness. For P4 the problem lies in paying attention only to the objects' good qualities, perceiving them as inherently good and therefore a true source of happiness. This leads to developing attachment, the wish to possess the object or not to be separate from it along with an unrealistic expectation that the object will function in a way as to always produce happiness. P4 knows this not to be the case.

For P4 it was interesting to observe what happened in his own mind when coming into contact with objects of enjoyments such as nice foods. P4 noted that despite his training and improvement there was still attachment, a view of the objects of enjoyment as being a true source of happiness generating a wish to possess them and not be separated from them.

P4's strategy to overcome attachment is not

that I better eat bread (laughter) or have not attachment because it's for me not the issue but enjoy it with the mind of...With a relaxed mind...So it means not to renounce to this enjoyments that I have, but to...Yeah, but to find this balance that was what brought his first topic to my mind,

this is two things that I will take personal, this...See what it does personally with my daily things, with my daily experience of food and of enjoyments and of something...To get then the second issues and not to renounce too much and to live it and to...Yeah...

So that once again, quite interesting!, to work with this and to watch my mind, what set determination from the past. According to this topic I felt that was something already changed, something already moved (laughter). As a topic which I knew about, maybe I didn't get it right...Yeah this was a ..

This was the first part of the retreat, of the renunciation part which...Yeah...Which has... I worked on these things on this topic and things came up and....

I: And how was it to work with those topics as they come up in your retreat?

P4: Yeah, this is always exciting! (laughter) Nothing more exciting as our mind! (laughter) This is more exciting than any TV; (laughter) our crazy mind...

Yeah , it's, I mean, the thing is basically to be honest with myself, to see... because if you have some Dharma knowledge, if you have studied, then your mind is something really quick with answers and so there's the..."Ah! yeah, yeah, yeah, this is this and this is this..." But to really ask ourselves again and

by completely avoiding coming into contact with the objects of enjoyment such as nice foods. P4's strategy is rather to train in experiencing objects of enjoyment with the understanding that the happiness they bring is temporary. In this way P4 aims to find a balance between the extremes of being attached or avoidant. P4's strategy implies a shift in the quality of his experience that is brought about by changing the way he perceives the world and the objects he relates to.

There are two things P4 will take personally as a consequence of this retreat:

- 1) to integrate renunciation practice in his daily experience and monitor how this relates to his experiences;
- 2) not to renounce enjoyments but their distorted perceived meaning as a true source of happiness thus still allowing himself to experience enjoyments with a correct understanding.

For P4 it was interesting to observe his mind at work and monitor his progress according to the determination he set in the past. P4 found he had improved his understanding of renunciation practice and had made some progress in his spiritual practice. P4 reflects perhaps his previous understanding of renunciation practice was not completely correct.

As P4 trained in the renunciation practice issues came up for him that caused him to experience difficulties.

*For P4 there is nothing more exciting than to train his own mind even when experiencing difficulties; P4 finds it more exciting than anything else.

For P4 working with his mind implied> being honest with himself as to what he observes in his mind, doing this continuously. Also for P4 this should be done without intellectualizing whatever he may be experiencing. P4 acknowledges

<p>again, honestly, what's really happening with our mind;</p>	<p>intellectualizing could occur easily as an escape, especially if one has great intellectual knowledge due to having studied the books. The result however is that one's experience does not change much.</p>
<p>what does it really do to watch it? Sometimes maybe just make a silent watcher, to lean back and see what's going on in your mind, in my mind, what's happening and why is it happening and...</p>	<p>P4 experimented the effects is has to observe and monitor his mind. P4 adopted at times the strategy of being "a silent watcher", to simply observe what is happening for him in his mind and why it is happening without attempting to bring about changes in his experience.</p>
<p>So, to get a little bit of sort of feedback (laughter) from my mind itself, to see really what is going on, not only what should go on or what shouldn't go on or what's...What could to be go on (laughter), doesn't... These things which can be quite intellectual but...</p>	<p>P4 developed the ability to observe himself honestly thus improving his level of self awareness. This was done without a judgmental attitude, disregarding his own expectations of what he thought should or should not happen in his mind. P4's strategy implied simply observing and temporarily abandoning judging what he was experiencing because this could serve to bias his perception of his own experience. For P4 there was the risk of becoming to intellectual when training the mind and he opposed this with these strategies.</p>
<p>Yeah, to work, to work more with...Yeah, in a relaxed way to be determined not to be biased of watching, just really see, just notice, just to get a feeling: what's good, what's worse to be worked on, what's...What's...Yeah... What's there to be from my own...From my own sense...From my own awareness of what's going on in my mind, so these honest questions... I: Right... P4:to ask myself these honest questions to get a real feeling, not to be biased, not to be too intellectual and....</p>	<p>P4 had strong motivation and set determination ermined to train his mind in an unbiased manner, not adopting an intellectual standpoint either. For P4 doing any of the previous would result in distress. P4's training consisted of observing with awareness and then identifying what was positive about his mind and what was negative and needed to to be worked on.</p>
<p>I: So you're becoming very aware of your state of mind during the retreat. P4: Yes, hum, definitely.</p>	<p>*P4's own awareness of his mind during the retreat was acute.</p>
<p>And also these...Because of these powerful teachings of Venerable Tarchin and the blessings, and the group is doing the same, the same situations, the energy is conducive and conditions are conducive.</p>	<p>For P4 there were conducive conditions on retreat that enabled him to train his mind. P4 identifies these as> 1)the powerful teachings from the retreat master; 2)the blessings; 3)and the group effect, due to the fact that they are all doing the same.</p>

This can ...Results of this can be experienced more and more...Quicker. For example if I do solitary retreat I notice the difference. When I do the same in solitary and when I do the same in a group because group energy from the teachings and the blessings...

And even this is a very short retreat from my relations (laughter). It's...

And I don't do it the first time. I'm always amazed how much can happen in this time and...

So this is a time, yeah, for me, which is really worthwhile, I feel it's really worthwhile to go into it and to look at the things also in the break times, to keep off course remembering on the meditation objects but also to connect what it means, really, or what's really there in my mind and what's to look and to feel and to, yeah, to see what's really going on or what, you know, the things I mentioned before...

It's...It's very difficult. I found this a very tricky issue. (laughter) It goes very deep because the mind is very deceptive. Sometimes is just ...You're thinking "Oh! yeah, I got this now." And then you can have a situation where it's really proved and you see that's it's not so...

And with the group together is more easy to get challenges, to get...Things are going not so right or you didn't get the things you really wanted, etc or something with...In relationship to what happens with this interaction with other people...

Off course we are silent and we don't look,

For P4 results from his training can be experienced quicker if he engages in group retreat due to the conducive conditions in comparison to his experience of solitary retreat. This comparison is according to P4's experience of engaging in retreat on some subjects both solitary and group retreat. P4's experience on solitary does not include teachings or other retreaters engaging in the same activities and meditations.

For P4 this was a short retreat since he has experience engaging in much longer retreats. P4 has been living on the retreat centre for the last 5 years and has engaged in many retreats both solitary and in group.

P4 has engaged in retreat on this subject before and he is always surprised by what can happen in a short time frame such as a week.

For P4 the time spent on retreat is really worthwhile, it has great meaning for him. P4 identifies the reasons for such:

- 5) training his mind during the retreat meditation sessions,
- 6) training his mind both during the breaks between meditation sessions,
- 7) maintaining mindfulness of the meditation object and also of its meaning at all times.

P4 considers training the mind to be a very difficult and profound task due to the mind's deceptiveness. P4 is learning to know his mind. P4 exemplifies the deceptiveness of the mind saying he thought at times he had achieved a certain level of mastery of a skill and then in a practical situation was confronted with the fact that he hadn't mastered the skill completely.

For P4 the group retreats present challenges easily because of the interaction with fellow retreaters and the fact that his own expectations might not come true.

During group retreat all retreaters observe

we don't have even eye contact, we avoid eye contact to avoid distractions (laughter) but it still... Still there are interactions, you're still relating to what other people do and how do you do these things, how do other people do.

Sometimes you get upset because somebody does something too quickly for you, just moving something with their arms and (demonstrates) (laughter) they were just... Yeah... It's... So many things can happen at this time, which you usually don't notice maybe;

by the way, and in this times when you get more subtle, when you get more sensitive then things can affect you more, more deeply, more... In any case it can be a very good experience of... You feel some love from somebody and you don't communicate but... Some positive feeling or energy...

Sometimes these little things just trigger something out and delusion comes, just...

I: What do you do then? What happens?

P4: Yeah... It's very different, it depends on what kind of state I am at that moment, what is just present in my mind to deal with the situation,

I mean, sometimes I do a sort of breathing meditation just to relax, sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't help! (laughter) it's a bit too strong.

Then... I try all these different methods. Sometimes I take... Make... Taking and Giving and also to... Yeah... It depends also on what it is off course...

Sometimes I remember Emptiness, it's

silence at all times and refrain from looking directly at each other to avoid distractions. Despite this P4 still considers people to be interacting in subtler ways and relating to others and to the way they do things. For P4 the silent does not annihilate the relational quality of the interactions with fellow retreaters, it only makes it different.

P4 has experienced being disturbed due to the way other people performed actions such as moving objects at a pace which he found too quick. For P4 various situations can cause this kind of reaction and he has greater awareness of his own reaction on retreat.

On retreat P4 admits to becoming more subtle and more sensitive. As a result he finds things can affect him more and at deeper levels on retreat in contrast to daily life.

For P4 this can result both in positive and negative experiences being experienced in an intensity that is different from the usual, more intense.

For P4 the sensitiveness of his reactions on retreat can trigger him to experience delusion to manifest, experience a distorted negative thoughts and emotions.

*P4 deals with negative thoughts and emotions in various ways. The strategy used depends on his condition when it happens and what is available in his mind to deal with it at the time. P4 thus recognizes the influence of internal conditions as to the choice of the strategy to apply. P4 identifies some of the strategies he uses to deal with negative thoughts and emotions:

1) P4 engages in breathing meditation to relax, this can help or not depending on the intensity of the negative thought or emotion,

2) P4 engages in the taking and giving practice, visualizing himself taking on the suffering of others and giving them the happiness they desire,

3) P4 reminds himself that the ultimate

created by my mind.

Sometimes I simply remember Karma; that these things that disturbed me can only disturb me because I disturbed others in the past, so reminds me of Purification.

It depends on what's just present in my mind and, yeah, what kind of method...

It's also different, I noticed, to same situations sometimes different things work for me.

To just let go, not suppress but to put the energy out of the anger or of the aversion...Often it's aversion, it's not really anger but yeah...

Oh! Yeah...or just, really interesting! , sometimes I simply watch. If it's not too strong, if I'm not in danger to act under this (laughter) state of mind.

In any kind you're connecting in very different kinds of ways, you don't have to communicate (laughter) to let others know that you don't appreciate this or that (laughter), so...

nature of all phenomena is emptiness and how everything he experiences is created by his own mind and does exist independently of his perception of it.

4) P4 reminds himself of the law of cause and effect, karma, and that everything he experiences in the present is the result of his past actions. Thus if he now experiences somebody disturbing him it is only because he has done something similar in the past. Taking responsibility for his actions P4 reminds himself of purification practice, a way to improve his experience and deal with adverse conditions. P4 patiently accepts the situation (internally) and reacts to it differently (externally) thus purifying whatever caused him to experience this bad experience and preventing himself from having the same experience in the future.

For P4 the choice of method depends both on the nature of situation and what is available in his mind at the time.

For P4 different strategies will work for the same kind of situation at different moments in time.

5) For dealing with anger and aversion P4 sometimes uses the strategy of: letting go, not suppressing the anger but putting the energy out of the anger or aversion. For P4 often the problem is aversion and not anger itself (differing in that anger wants to harm the object perceived as negative and aversion only wants to be separated from that object).

6) An interesting strategy P4 uses at times when faced with negative thoughts or emotions which are not too strong in intensity. If he considers he is not at risk of acting under their effect he will only observe and monitor his mind.

For P4 eventhough the retreaters are silent they can communicate to others in different ways that they don't appreciate what others are doing.

<p>If I'm not in danger, if I feel that I'm not in danger (laughter) because these things...Sometimes I misjudge it (laughter) but then I simply watch and see what that challenge does with my mind, what power it has to affect my mind or how long it stays and what to does</p>	<p>P4 continues to describe the "watching delusion" strategy, if he considers himself not to be at risk of acting under the effect of the negative thought or emotion he will only watch it. However at times P4 misjudges their power. At those times P4 stills observes how the negative thought or emotion affected him and how long it remained for.</p>
<p>and I noticed often or let's say sometimes when you just watch it, and then I just watch it, somehow it disappears so I have this feeling that these negative states of mind doesn't want to be watched! (laughter) It just functions and pushes you but if you look at it and "Hu!" It just...Yeah...It's some sort of, it just looses energy, somehow, just by watching and...</p>	<p>P4 noticed that at times the simple act of observing is enough to make negative thoughts and emotions disappear. P4 thinks these do not like to be watched and can only function when he is unaware of them but when he observes and acknowledges them they loose their power; by identifying them the negative thoughts and emotions will vanish.</p>
<p>Or maybe just by naming it, just identifying, that's what it is and naming it, what it does and ...Then...This works when the state of the delusion is not too strong, the negative mind is not too strong, then this can work...</p>	<p>7) Sometimes P4 merely names the negative mental pattern or emotion, identifying it and what its function is. For P4 this kind of strategy can work when the negative thought or emotion is not too intense,</p>
<p>And off course sometimes it happens that it doesn't work or I'm not quick enough (laughter)</p>	<p>P4 is not always able to apply the described strategies successfully enough to change the quality of his experience and make negative thoughts and emotions. This is sometimes due to timing, taking too long to apply the strategy.</p>
<p>so then I have to purify it afterwards! (laughter) I am thinking and reflecting on it "I should have known better, I really should have put more effort in.." or something like this.. I: So, you go back and you reflect on it? P4: Yes! It...Especially if ...If I was...Yeah...I mean...Sometimes...</p>	<p>When P4 is unable to apply the strategies successfully enough he later engages in purification practice. P4 does so by reflecting on what happened, regretting it and performing spiritual activities to bring about changes in his perception and behavior. When engaging in reflection P4 contemplates what he should have done differently and how, training himself for future situations.</p>
<p>Even with this long, I have had long retreat experience; sometimes you are not so aware, not so present...The mind is so tricky, you have so many different levels you would have to control, so...You're not always really really aware and present and conscious...And simply happens what happens...</p>	<p>When engaging in long retreat P4 is not fully aware and present at all times. For P4 the mind is very deceptive and has many different levels that need to be controlled. In P4-s experience when he is not fully aware then things can happen without control.</p>
<p>Something comes up and you act</p>	<p>Sometimes it cab happen that P4 engages in</p>

something, you do something and then on a reflection, which is also wonderful time in retreat, to reflect on these things, later when you have a walk when things calm down (laughter) and really to see what happened again or what shouldn't have happened or... Yeah...

So, it has this different levels of reacting, so it's very different from the topic, it's very different from the method, sometimes this works better, sometimes just watching, sometimes missing to do anything and then reflecting (laughter)...

reflecting sometimes also can be positive, that... That I was happy in a situation in which I usually from the past tend to react not very balanced (laughter)! That I managed or I got at least better. But these reflections are usually shorter, just "You know, that was not too bad".

But if it doesn't really work out very well then it can be big... Also... Especially in retreat, it's a... Can be a... Ending in self-exploratory approach and depressed states and pushed down by your own expectations, so it's also tricky, this is also tricky because at the end it's the same negative force, it's directed not to others but to yourself...

I: Right...

behavior he might regret later due to not having complete control at the time. Later P4 engages in reflection on these occurrences when he feels more settled. P4 engages in it often when going for walks. For P4 reflection is a pleasant and meaningful activity to engage in while on retreat.

P4 emphasizes that there are different levels to his own negative thoughts and emotions. There are thus different strategies for dealing and coping with negative states of mind and these can lead to different outcomes. Even when applying the same strategy if in different moments in time this can lead to different outcomes indicating he is aware of the multi-factorial nature of situations. P4 takes into account that from his own experience that there are several conditions (internal and external) that determine the success of applying a certain strategy, that it is a multi-factorial scenario.

P4 engages in reflection also on positive experiences to encourage himself to persist in his spiritual training. This occurs for him when he monitors that he has succeeded in using a certain strategy to deal with negative states or that he has improved his skills when compared to past experiences. For P4 these reflections tend to be shorter than the ones on failure because they don't involve changing his own behavior but only congratulating himself for good behavior.

P4 can sometimes unwillingly engage in a self-beating approach and depressive due to high expectations of an outcome that wasn't achieved through his performance. In these situations P4 would not be able to cope with negative thoughts and emotions in the way he would expect himself to. Also P4 would not be able to interpret these situations in a positive and constructive way. P4 considers that when this happens it is due to his own high expectations of himself, his performance and a focus on a desired outcome. For P4 this situation is not beneficial. P4 identifies the process of what happens > he directs a negative emotion of anger at the self rather than others. For P4 this is in essence the same as being angry at other people since

P4: Pushing yourself down which is also not good so it's also worthwhile to do something against this, so yeah....

I: How do you deal with it?
P4: With the reflection.

I: The one you just mentioned when it is not directed at others, when it's directed at you, how do you deal with that?
P4: Yeah, that's also different. It depends on how much embarrassed I am! (laughter) It depends on, yeah, how I felt this situation...

One thing in retreat that I noticed also is the times that, in these retreat situations, the mind tends to...I know also from other's experience, not only mine...The mind tends to always exaggerate things, so...So, yeah, because the mind is sensitive we want to mix the mind with virtue, which is also...Which works better in retreat off course and normally, but these things can come up really big and then you see...Then you can push it down and it can be...Feel like you're a complete unworthy practitioner, complete unworthy monk. (laughter)
I: Oh, wow...

P4: So, and...Yeah...Then usually I try to...What works for me best is for example, are Prostrations because I'm doing something physical and with the mind of regret is pointing out the issue, what really

the essence of both situations is yet the same> a feeling of anger/ differing only on the object it is directed at.

P4 considers this response of holding negative self-defeating thoughts about himself and directing this anger at himself not to be a desirable one, it has no benefits. P4 considers it is important and meaningful to react and address this kind of response in order to change his experience and react to situations that may trigger this response in a more positive and constructive way.

*P4 uses reflection as part of his strategy to cope with holding negative thoughts directed at others (anger).

*When P4 experiences holding negative and self-defeating thoughts, when the anger he experiences is directed at himself then P4 recurs to different strategies depending on several factors. These factors have to do with the way in which P4 perceived the situation and the intensity of his feeling of embarrassment, shame.

sometimes P4 perceives things and experiences his own feelings in an exaggerated way, with a level of intensity not adjusted to situations. P4 has confirmed that fellow retreaters share the same experience. For P4 several factors contribute to this:

- 1)The mind is very sensitive
- 2) The retreator is motivated to train in virtuous positive mental patterns and emotions and recognizes this will be easier on retreat than in daily life - this can lead to high expectations of oneself's performance and experience.

P4-s experience of intense negative thoughts and emotions that result in self-defeating and depressed states approaches can escalate at times to an experience of feelings of unworthiness and shame regarding his self-image as a Buddhist practitioner and ordained person.

P4 has different strategies available to cope with self-defeating depressed states, one of them being prostration practice:
1)P4 engages in prostration practice, a practice consisting of physical prostrations to

affected me, what pushed me down, naming, pointing out and regretting it and doing something to solve, to dissolve this. And prostrations I noticed are quite good because it's also physical work, after a while you get, you start to sweat (laughter), you feel that you're doing something and, yeah, with a mind, with the mind of faith and with these positive minds and... Then often this helps for me, it's something which doesn't really subside with just reflecting on it, just seeing...

Just sometimes I just recite some Mantras or make some smaller things but when I notice it's a bit more serious, more pain or more self exploratory reproach that something exists,

then I start to make Prostrations and afterwards it feels better it feels clean, it feels also more, yeah, I have the feeling that I can relate to myself more then before and things are calming down a bit and I see my beast more realistic relation with the situation.

So this has also got different levels, sometimes I had periods when this kind of things lasted longer than a few hours, a few days but... Yeah this is measure for me, so often for me, is to do some prostrations.

the Buddhas while maintaining a mental attitude of faith in Buddha's positive qualities and regret for the actions (mental, verbal or physical) that he identifies as inappropriate. P4 identifies some reasons for this practice to be successful for him:

»P4 maintains a positive approach through his faith in the good qualities of Buddha and his teachings as a method than can work to help him solve his problems.

»P4 identifies the cause of his problem by naming it;

»P4 maintains a recognition of regret for the inappropriate action reinforcing his motivation to change;

»P4 remembers the negative consequences for him of his inappropriate behavior;

» doing something physical helps P4 to cope with the negative states of mind and have a feeling he is doing something to bring about changes in his behavior;

P4 says he uses prostration practice when the problem does not go away only with reflection.

2) Another strategy P4 uses is mantra recitation and he uses this for problems which do not represent such a big challenge for him and thus don't result in self-defeating and depressed responses from him. The mantra recitation is a practice for protecting oneself from negative thoughts and/or emotions through reciting a phrase in Sanskrit or Tibetan that states a wish for liberation from suffering for oneself or others and asking for blessings (inspiring transforming energy from the Buddhas).

1)For P4 there are benefits of engaging in purification practice, these are:

»P4 can relate better to himself,

»P4 can get a different and more adjusted perspective on the situation he is experiencing and;

»P4 feels better about himself and the external world.

For P4 situations can have different levels of intensity. Negative thoughts and emotions can last for shorter or longer periods of time, from a few hours up to a few days.

P4 emphasizes prostration practice to work for him as a coping strategy.

I: So would you say that from being on retreat you learned to deal with these issues from your mind in a different way?

P4: Yeah, definitely. Definitely. You experience your mind in a different way than you usually experience it

and this is can be quite interesting, (laughter) quite exciting! Quite scary sometimes, to feel the power of your mind and you can relate more to how your mind works, what it does with you and what are the driving forces behind it and...

Merely by identifying it sometimes it's possible to keep more balance and ...But sometimes also as I mentioned in the...

Basically you see these mechanisms and basically it works like that

but sometimes things can be over-exaggerated, positive and negative, so sometimes you are quite high (laughter) but everything...Blissed out, spaced out and sometimes you are like in a deep depression (laughter) about everything. so...

So, yeah, on one point you learn more about your mind, you learn more what it does, what power it has, how it functions, which is, yeah, very exciting.

On the other hand it also throws you into more extreme reactions to every kind of thing which is beneficial for when you meditate on your meditation object, then the mind is more subtle, it can mix very...More easier than in daily life with these topics, get more into it, get more deep, can trigger out experiences more easily but... Yeah, also in other ways it can easily get quite deluded mind by exaggerating ridiculous things.

*P4 experiences his mind in a different way while on retreat when compared to his daily life out of retreat and this enables him to relate to his thoughts and emotions in a differently way.

Being able to relate to his mind in a way different than that of daily life is for P4 very challenging and motivating. P4 can get a better understanding also form personal experience of how the mind works, how it affects his own experience and its power over him. P4 becomes more aware of aspects of the mind that are not usually accessible to him. All of this for P4 can at times be experienced as scary.

For P4 it is sometimes possible to maintain the mind balanced merely by monitoring it and identifying what happens with it, its mechanisms and functions, identifying the mind itself.

P4 is more aware and can with greater ease identify the mechanisms of the mind.

Despite this for P4 sometimes things can be experienced in an exaggerated fashion both positively and negatively. On retreat P4 can go from experiencing extremely positive feelings to feeling depressed and is more aware of his own mental and emotional state.

P4 learned more about his mind, what it does, what power it has, how it functions. P4 finds this to be very exciting, challenging and this motivates him.

For P4 an ambiguous characteristic of his experience of being on retreat is that it can throw him into more extreme internal reactions to things than his daily life out of retreat. P4 reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of this: it can be good if he is engaging in meditation on the meditation's object (which is easier on retreat compared with daily life); it can also be negative when he experiences negative and distorted states

I: And how is that difference between watching your mind while you're on retreat or watching your mind in your daily life?

P4: (sigh) One difference is that the level you work on is different, so you see more clearly what's going on in your mind, you can relate to it more, you can...Relate to it on another level than busier daily life. What's...

One other point is that you can...You have more time to reflect on it, so you have more time to go through the process, to look at some things,

there's also one thing I wanted to mention before is that sometimes it's really worse to go into it..

I: Right...

P4: ...Really to go to something and some distractions, some specific distractions, some specific topic comes up in your mind, something from the past, often is something from the past, then maybe it's really worse to look into it in the meditation breaks or sometimes...

Even maybe to make a brief meditation on it and go "What is this? Where does this come from? Where does this energy come from?" and "This is something to be solved, something that is making something that I am not conscious".

So in a retreat you have this mental space which your usually daily life, you have too much commitments or...You can feel these things but you have not so much chance really to process it, to get...To go into it and to get a sense of what it is actually.

Sometimes it is amazing that you see it comes from something else, when you go into it, it's also sort of...The topics can, that can come up in a retreat, even in a short retreat you can...Your mind is more subtle and you can discover more connections

of mind.

*For P4 there are some differences between watching his mind on retreat and on daily life:

1) P4 works on different levels of his mind, deeper levels on retreat. Also on retreat P4 experiences greater awareness and more clarity as to what is happening in his mind and he can relate to it better.

2)on retreat P4 has more time to reflect on things and go through the process of self-reflection and inner analysis.

For P4 going into deep reflection on negative thoughts and/or emotions is not always the best strategy for coping with these. It can be harmful especially if these function as a distraction from the meditation object and also if these are related to memories from the past. P4 specifies this is so both during the meditation session and meditation breaks.

A strategy for dealing with thoughts or emotions that may be confusing is to engage in short meditation on them, identify their contents and origins. P4 then decides what what course of action to take.

For P4 there is a contrast between retreat and daily life. P4's experience on retreat is that he is more available to address whatever may come up for him than what he is on his usual daily life. This is because of the amount of commitments P4 would have on his daily life which would require his attention and take up his time. P4 on daily life can feel the need for reflection but has no chance to engage in it with the depthness required to process things and get a sense of what they actually mean to him.

P4 on retreat explores his consciousness and the associations between different themes/issues. P4 is amazed at the connections that he can discover even in a short retreat. P4 thinks the fact that he accesses deeper levels of his consciousness

which are more subtle which you are not aware usually.

So maybe, I think in daily life the tendency is more to suppress things because it's not really time to deal with it, to cover it somehow and in a retreat situation you have naturally more time, if you want or not (laughter) you have more time to face these things, so you cannot just go to another distraction to get rid of it (laughter).

And that can be quite challenging but it makes a retreat special, it makes it interesting, it makes very worthwhile. To face retreat situations, you know also from your own experience, sometimes it's not really (laughter) something pleasant (laughter)

I: Yeah.

P4: ...Not really honey licking, so...But this is...These other things that, also from my own experience, are really interesting and really makes it worthwhile

and to face this and to face your mind, to be alone with your mind...It's really...To sit alone, sometimes I've been scared! (laughter)

I: So how does that feel, to work with your mind, to be alone with your mind, you say it's worthwhile...How is that?

P4: Scary! (laughter) Sometimes quite...Quite amusing (laughter). Sometimes it's...It's good to...To know that you can, just the situation that you know you can be alone with your mind, you don't have...

It's especially scary at the beginning...When you build up retreats, when make maybe the first couple of days in a week...Because you get more confident, of the times when you face everything that's been brought up from your mind, what is in there, what is lying

while on retreat contribute to gaining greater knowledge of his own mental processes.

For P4 there is a contrast between retreat and daily life as to what strategy is mostly used to deal with difficult thoughts and emotions.

For P4 the most used strategy in daily life is suppressing things and distracting oneself whereas in retreat it is to face things. For P4 one of the different factors contributing to this contrast is the time available to look at oneself. On retreat P4 has plenty of time to engage in reflection and address his difficulties and even if he wanted to engage in distractions these would not be available to him making it difficult to overlook his issues.

For P4 retreat can be quite challenging due to having to address his difficulties and this can be at times experienced as unpleasant. For P4 the challenge and its meaning make it worthwhile and special despite the odd unpleasant sensations he might have to undergo.

P4 on retreat experiences being alone with himself, his thoughts and emotions. Part of P4's experience is sitting alone, motionless. P4 has at times experienced feelings of fright when being alone on retreat.

*For P4 training his mind is at times experienced as entertaining / amusing. For P4 it feels good to know that he can cope alone in situations that are challenging to him and this builds up his confidence in his own ability.

For P4 training his mind on retreat was particularly scary at the beginning of this retreat training. For P4 also the first couple of days in a retreat will be more frightening than the rest of it. For P4 this is so because as time goes by he builds up his confidence

there.

Sometimes there are some topics like anger, some fear also, which you have to address and identify and usually in daily life if it comes and, usually there's not the time and maybe not even the wish, sometimes we don't have the wish to go deeper into it, we just go to another distraction, there are plenty of them in daily life, so, to cover it or not really to wish to work on it. And in a retreat you have to (laugher)!

Especially if it's solitary retreat, it's more intense from this point of view. In solitary retreat you get your meals on the door so you don't see anybody, maybe from the distance, so we have to...To deal with it.

Off course you have the Meditation Master to go to, Venerable Tarchin at Tharpaland, if it gets too bad, if it's too overwhelming (laugher) which sometimes happen, but...

Yeah, once again this is very positive and you are really, you're getting stronger, you're getting the confidence, you're getting more relaxed at things that happen in your mind, more balanced, so..

.It might sound a bit scary sometimes when I say these things for others maybe, to have not so much good experience "Oh! Ah, can't stand this.." this is...from my experience this is, also from others, you start from somewhere, you build it up, you face the situations gradually, more and more.

based on past experience. For P4 it is encouraging and a source of self-confidence to overcome challenging situations experienced on retreat and he uses these later on to boost his confidence by remembering his ability and experience.

When experiencing emotions such as anger or fear P4 feels the need to identify and address them as a coping strategy and this is what P4 does on retreat. For P4 this contrasts with what happens usually in daily life.

For P4 several factors contribute to this contrast if they are present in daily life: lack of available time; lack of the wish to explore one's emotions; use of distraction, suppression or denial as coping strategies.

For P4 solitary retreat is more intense from the point of view of training one self to be aware of one's mental processes, gaining greater insight into them and applying effort from one's own side to address them.

When P4 is on solitary retreat his contact with others is limited to spotting them from a great distance, even his meals are left at his door.

This solitude increases P4's awareness of his wish to deal with his own difficulties himself as he can't use others' help.

However P4 knows he is not completely alone. In case of need P4 can resort to the meditation master. P4 will do so if he considers that he can't cope with some situation. P4 has done this in the past.

For P4 it is very positive to work with the mind alone. P4 feels he gets stronger and builds up confidence in himself. As a result P4 feels he now deals with his thoughts and emotions in a more relaxed and balanced way than before.

P4 reflects perhaps others will consider his experience on retreat not to be a pleasant one and might think retreat situations can be so unpleasant that they can become unbearable.

However P4 emphasizes that from his own and others' experience the confidence needed to face retreat situations is built up

And usually, especially in a blessed environment like a Retreat Centre with a Meditation Master, with his prayers, you are strong enough to deal with everything, so your mind really cannot...Shouldn't scare you really, cannot really...

You don't run crazy but sometimes looks like it! (laughter) But...So, there's no real danger of freaking out or getting quite madness.

I: So because of the environment and having a Retreat Master...

P4: Yes. And for the prayers and...

Also off course there's the knowledge of having a Retreat Master, having somebody to speak to if it gets too bad or if you think you cannot deal with the situation, to have some kind of emergency anchor that you can just hold (laughter) and...

But often it is so that you are encouraged to go to these topics yourself, especially when you know other retreaters make the same retreat and they might have the same problems and they're doing well so that's also encouraging.

The other point is that, from my experience and from others', you can deal with much more issues that you think about in the first place...

gradually; every person will start at some level and improve their skills from there on so that they can then face greater and greater challenges.

For P4 the conditions in the retreat centre are conducive for one to develop ability to cope with one's difficulties without fear. These conditions and P4 mentions them are: the blessed environment; the retreat master; the retreat masters prayers.

For P4 with such conducive conditions he feels capable of dealing with everything and whatever frightening thoughts or emotions he might experience will not put him off.

At times P4 might feel like he is going crazy, losing control, although he knows this not to be the case. For P4 there is no real danger of getting out of control because of the conducive conditions he mentioned before.

For P4 knowing he can resort to the retreat master in case he thinks he can't deal with the situation provides him with a sense of security. For P4 this along with the other conducive conditions such as the environment and the prayers enables him to feel safe to explore and train his mind.

When resorting to the retreat master P4 is often encouraged to deal with the difficult situations on his own, to explore his own resources and potential for coping. P4 also encourages himself to increase his own ability. For P4 knowing that other retreaters also experience problems and difficulties and they are despite that doing well gives him encouragement.

It is P4's experience his capacity is greater than he would at first expect, that he can tolerate and cope with a lot more than he would imagine himself to; P4 compares and contrasts his perceived level of tolerance and ability to cope with challenging situations to his actual level tolerance and ability to cope with challenging situations drawing from past personal experience.

P4 compared this with fellow retreaters experiences and found out it was a common

That you think about this situation, to be alone with the mind and to have no escape, to have... You're just there and you have to deal somehow with it... So it's really worthwhile, it's a... Yeah, to face this situations makes you stronger makes you more confident that results are only positive.

There... Only one thing you should really avoid and that is to break the retreat, to go off, then you break the process, you... It's quite bad and people who did it suffered afterwards quite a lot, so... It's not... This is really dangerous..

I: Is it something that could easily happen that you have the wish to just go away?

P4: Yeah, sometimes it happens. For me it was not so strong this issue because... (laughter)

I don't know but for me it didn't really, it's been a point when... But the suffering can be... Or to avoid situations, to avoid suffering when suffering comes, especially mental suffering, then some people can really develop the strong wish to leave and some did, I know, and they regret afterwards. It's... When they come back, maybe, then it's different, something else will happen, it's different to... They have still unfinished things and they left in a state which is not good, so it's... So this is one thing I think that should be avoided but the others things really, the knowledge that you can deal with these things it's a ... Even deep, deep things can be, after you went through, after...

There is also one point one big lesson, which I learned in retreat, especially in retreat conditions, is to accept suffering. When you accept, when I accept suffering, then everything was fine because the suffering comes and goes, how it comes it goes, so it's just a matter of time and... And

experience.

For P4 being alone with himself, his thoughts and emotions knowing he has no escape, no option but to deal with whatever happens are characteristics of his experience on retreat. The result of willingly going through this process is that P4 feels stronger and more confident in his ability to cope with himself and life at large. Enduring difficult thoughts and emotions seen as challenging in order to develop coping strategies is seen by P4 as positive and makes it worthwhile for him to go on retreat,

for P4 there is only one thing one should avoid on retreat and that is to quit, to give up retreat if it gets difficult. P4 has seen people who have done have suffered much and he finds this to be dangerous.

*For P4 the wish to quit can arise at times but was not a big problem for him personally.

For P4 when experiencing suffering on retreat people can generate the wish to quit and leave in order to avoid that suffering. For P4 the mental suffering is generally worse than the physical suffering. P4 knows people who have left retreat and regretted it afterwards. For P4 when these people came back it was worse than before they had left because they had unfinished things and they had left in a negative state of mind creating more difficulty for themselves to deal with.

A big lesson P4 learned on retreat was to accept suffering.

For P4 when he accepts suffering then everything is OK for him, his attitude of acceptance helps him cope and it doesn't seem to him like there is a problem anymore. P4 focuses on the impermanent nature of

<p>afterwards, you have done something and this something cannot affect you anymore or maybe lesser and lesser, which means you have just exhausted something for yourself and...</p>	<p>suffering, that it comes and goes and it is just a matter of time until it goes away again. For P4 after the suffering is gone he feels he has done something through accepting and that through this the suffering can affect him lesser and lesser. P4 uses this strategy and believes that maybe he can even exhaust the causes of that suffering for himself because of changing his attitude when faced with suffering.</p>
<p>Yeah, to go through these things, to accept the suffering connected with topics, they are your own topics and they are there anyway, if you want them or not, but the courage to face them gives also strengths, inner strengths to deal with them and in a relaxed way so it's also one topic: to accept suffering, to...</p>	<p>For P4 when experiencing suffering he focuses on the fact that the suffering is there whether he wants to deal with it or not. As a strategy P4 choses to accept it and this gives him inner strength to deal with it in a more relaxed way.</p>
<p>For me always think which...The ability to accept this also, not to say but...I noticed very clearly, there was a time if I acted under the influence of mental suffering, especially mental, physical is not so bad, sometimes you have physical suffering in retreat but it's...It's worse the mental, then you can get quite nervous and..(laughter)...</p>	<p>According to P4's experience the mental suffering is worse to deal with than physical suffering.</p>
<p>Yeah, so to accept suffering is such a freedom, it gives such...It's such a space, such a ...Let things happen...That's courage and...Yeah, this simple practice and not to get too nervous, not to get mad about it "Oh! I have to do something, I have to do something!" Don't worry, you don't have a...</p>	<p>For P4 accepting suffering gives him freedom, space and courage and allows him to develop an attitude of simply letting things happens without grasping at expectations. For P4 this is a simple practice that can be done: not getting too nervous or worrying about having to do something about one's own suffering and just accepting it.</p>
<p>Sometimes it can also be that you escape into Dharma practice, into making an Opponent Power, making...starting to recite Mantras...And sometimes...Sometimes it's...</p>	<p>For P4 the frantic superficial application of Buddha's teachings can also be misused at times as an escape to avoid accepting suffering.</p>
<p>Yeah! This is really one point: to accept suffering in retreat, it makes it really strong to accept it also in daily life and to have a balanced mind, which...</p>	<p>P4 reinforces the importance of accepting suffering as a strategy that enables him to have a strong and balanced mind. For P4 training like this in retreat is equally as important as training like this in daily life.</p>
<p>Which on the other hand, in my experience also helps to shorten the period of suffering, if you start to get nervous about it sometimes it gets even stronger.</p>	<p>In P4's experience to accept suffering helps to even shorten the extension in time of the experience of suffering. In contrast getting nervous about it makes it more intense.</p>

<p>I: Seems very empowering, all that you are telling. Wonderful experience in retreat. P4: Yeah, it's quite interesting! (laughter) It's quite interesting to work with this crazy mind! I: I think we are about to finish. P4: Yeah. I: Is there anything else that you would like to say before we finish? Or anything you would like to add that you have forgotten? P4: No, that's OK. I: Thank you so much! P4: You're welcome.</p>	
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Participante 5

Meaning Units	Psychological Meaning
<p>I: So can you describe for me the experience of being on this Lamrim meditation retreat? P5: Yes, what in particular do you want to know about my experience? I: Just in general how it was for you to be on the retreat. Anything that you feel is appropriate to tell me. P5: Yeah, so...I've been on other short retreats and most of them involved half days of silence so in the morning you're silent and then in the afternoon you can talk to people.</p> <p>So, this one was different because it was...It was complete silence from a certain point on and it was much stricter, so you couldn't even make...you're not supposed to make eye contact, communicate with people in other ways, making hand gestures, you're only supposed to write a note if it was really necessary and in that case you write to one of two people...</p> <p>but because I had been, I had had some experience of doing small retreats with some silence; I had some expectations of what it might be like, so I wasn't really expecting that it was going to play out exactly in that way but...</p> <p>I'm that betting some of the people you've talked to might have described some of</p>	<p>P5 has engaged in short retreats previous to this retreat experience and most of these involved being silent for half of the day (before lunch).</p> <p>For this retreat P5 was observing complete silence for the whole of the retreat, she remained silent all day long every day. The silence rules included: no eye contact, no communicating with other people verbally or non-verbally. This was new for P5, she had never engaged in this kind of retreat before. P5 knew however she could leave a written note to specific people in case she needed anything.</p> <p>Due to P5's previous experience of engaging in short and partially silent retreats she had developed some expectations of what this experience would be like. P5 was aware thought that things may not happen in the exact way she had imagined them to.</p> <p>P5 thinks some of the other retreaters who have been interviewed might have said they</p>

<p>these things, that you feel very very still and very peaceful and...different experiences like that.</p>	<p>had a very peaceful experienced and felt very still.</p>
<p>For me this particular retreat was...during the sessions I would be...I would find myself being annoyed and you...I don't tend toward annoyance, it's very small irritation, I notice it, I go "Oh! you're annoyed..." and then it goes away. But with this retreat it kept coming up.</p>	<p>P5 on this particular retreat experienced feelings of annoyance during the retreat sessions which she became aware of through her process of monitoring her mind. P5 does not tend to experience annoyance in her daily life. When P5 does experience annoyance in her daily life it usually goes away just by her becoming aware of it and identifying it. However on this retreat P5 experienced annoyance repeatedly and this came as a surprise to her.</p>
<p>The person I was sitting next to had some habits</p>	<p>The object of P5-as feelings of annoyance was a fellow retreator she was sitting next to. This person had some habits that would annoy her.</p>
<p>and I talked to my Teacher about it afterwards and I told him "Things kept coming up and I kept trying to apply some kind of opponent"</p>	<p>P5 later discussed her retreat experience with her Buddhist teacher. P5 discussed the strategies she was using to deal with the feeling of annoyance and with the person she was feeling annoyed by. These were:</p>
<p>and I'm studying "Eight Steps to Happiness" now and we're having exam, have a written exam in the end of June and I was kidding my Teacher and saying "I think I had the practical exam on the retreat"</p>	<p>1) P5 interpreted the situations as a challenge and an opportunity to apply practically the teachings of the Buddhist book she is currently studying with her teacher in a foundation study programme.</p>
<p>because one of the sections in "Eight Steps" is about how kind other living beings are and one aspect of that is how...how could we practice giving with no-one to give to?</p>	<p>2) P5 interpreted living beings to be kind to her. P5 did this by focusing on the fact that without them she would not be able to develop the good quality of generosity or love. These qualities are recognized as an important part of her spiritual training.</p>
<p>how could we practice patience with no-one to irritate us? And so when somebody annoys us, we try to think "Oh! They're being so kind because they're giving me this opportunity to train and this is leading me on this Path that I've chosen that I want to be on" so, as soon as I would just have to laugh at myself both at what I was getting annoyed at</p>	<p>3) P5 reinterpreted the person she found at first annoying to be in fact kind to her. She did so by focusing on the fact that she could not train in patience if he hadn't acted as an object of her annoyance. By developing patience P5 was making progress on her chosen spiritual path. As a result P5 would just laugh at herself and the situation which it was no longer perceived as annoying.</p>
<p>but also seeing that my Spiritual Guide's hand was in this, either creating this situation</p>	<p>4) P5 interpreted the situation has maybe having been created by her spiritual guide in</p>

<p>for my benefit</p> <p>or seeing this annoying person even as a Buddha.</p> <p>And it was somebody that I know from other festivals and get along really well and I see him now and I feel fondly toward him...</p> <p>I don't know if you want to hear details? I: Yeah, sure, go ahead... P5: Because I've...when I talk to other people...for your research it might be useful to have a bit more detail but...when...when I've described this to some close friends or my Teacher about what was going...well, I told my Teacher the details but other people I was trying not to say what I was annoyed by because I found myself having...wanting to justify it by saying " This really was annoying, this wasn't some trivial thing, it was really annoying!"</p> <p>and particularly in the context of Tharpaland because it's...I...it's...</p> <p>I think you need your Teacher's permission to do even a short group retreat there and when I had heard about it was from, mostly from a person who did a fairly long retreat there, almost 3 years, and one of the other things they told us in the introduction was that if you need...you should very much try not to cough, try not to sneeze, and if you absolutely had to, that you should give people some kind of fore warning because if you make a sudden loud sound like that you can disturb their inner winds and it can make it very difficult for them to meditate. so I've heard, some people have said this was true of Venerable Tarchin but certainly of people almost of his caliber, that when their winds get disturbed like that, when they've been very very concentrated, that they can't meditate for months because of that</p>	<p>order for her to train and make progress.</p> <p>5) P5 reinterpreted the situation as to perceive the person she at first saw as annoying as being in fact a Buddha.</p> <p>P5 knew the person she was perceiving as being annoying from other Buddhist events. He was a male Buddhist practitioner. P5 had a good relationship with him before that retreat and she continues to relate to him fine now after the retreat.</p> <p>P5 discussed this challenging situation of perceiving somebody to be annoying and having feelings of annoyance towards them with her Buddhist teacher. P5 did so because she thought it could be meaningful as part of her spiritual training. However P5 did not want to discuss this situation with people in general because she was aware of trying to justify herself stating the characteristic of annoyance was coming from the person's side rather than from her own perception of things. P5 knows this not to be the case.</p> <p>P5's expectations of this particular retreat centre contributed to her experience of wanting to justify this person and situation as being annoying independently of her perception of it.</p> <p>The characteristics of the retreat centre that contributed to P5's expectations are: 1) P5 knew one needs one's teacher's permission to engage even in a short group retreat in this retreat centre so it is selective and there is certain criteria for people to be accepted in it. 2) P5 had knowledge of this retreat centre through a person who had done a 3 year retreat and whom she probably admires. 3) During the introduction to the retreat P5's retreat group was told not to make noises and were thought specific ways of sneezing and coughing as to not disturb fellow retreaters. 4) P5 is aware that even advanced meditators can get disturbed by sudden noises and this can cause them disruption in their meditation practice for a long time, P5</p>
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interference..

so anyway, with that in mind I had this idea that there would be a certain standard of behavior and so I was sitting next to somebody who would sigh frequently and at irregular intervals during the meditation and at one meditation he took off his metal watch in the middle of the meditation, and was rattling it around and putting it on the table and...he...during the meditation he took out his notebook and started writing. Writing, writing, writing!

And...and I kept thinking "wow, that's a..." I was floored?? actually that he had done those things. This sighing not so much but...because the sighing I think he may not even been aware of but the others things seemed like...you have to be aware that you're taking out your notebook and writing down your notes (she was funny, I laughed)

and I...in some other contexts I wouldn't have been so surprised but because of this idea that I had of this particular retreat center, I...

and off course I couldn't talk to him but my mind was saying "what are you doing?! What are you thinking?!"

and...and then we would recite the root text at the beginning and every single...we would do it every session and every single time he would get 2 or 3 of the words wrong...and I...at first I thought "oh, he's doing it from memory and so that's why he's saying Samsara instead of karma" or something else like that... but I looked over and no, he was reading from the text (surprised) and after it happened for a few sessions I was wondering if I should be worried about him, if something was happening with his mind and..

he would also rub his hands on his pants, like this motion (demonstrates) that would be a bit distracting and...

when we recite the text together we are following the teacher and so it's like an

mentions the example of the retreat master.

Despite these expectations held by P5 about the retreat centre, the person who she sat next to would constantly make noises such as: sighing, playing with his metal watch or take notes during the meditations.

P5 wandered about the level of awareness this person had over what this person was doing. P5 thought he might not have been aware of some of the things he was doing but she was certain he had to be aware of some of it.

P5 was very surprised by this behavior as this went against her expectations of what a retreat would be like in this retreat centre. P5 wouldn't have been surprised if this had happened elsewhere.

P5 didn't say anything to the fellow retreator as she was observing silence but she felt like doing it.

P5's fellow retreator when reciting a text with the group, couldn't follow and would recite wrong words; this happened several times in different days. P5 wandered if he was reciting from memory and after checking this was not the case began to worry whether the fellow retreator was actually OK.

P5's fellow retreator also rubbed his hands against his trousers making loud noises.

P5's fellow retreator, when reciting the text with the group, would be louder than the

<p>omsey where you, you're following someone so you should be listening carefully, their pace and everything and this person had a loud voice so I could hear him more than I could hear the teacher that I was trying to follow, especially because this person was sitting right beside me. But also his pace would be completely off and so I also couldn't hear, couldn't concentrate on the words clearly, because they were...there was a kind of echo where the teacher was the echo (I laughed again). (She sighs)</p>	<p>teacher and his pace was different. P5 found this distracting and disturbing.</p>
<p>and, like I said, sometimes...sometimes it just seemed amusing and the I would try...I was happy because I persisted and I kept coming up with some angle,</p>	<p>P5 continuously tried to come up with different perspectives of reinterpreting the situation in order to perceive it as something else rather than annoying. P5 is pleased about herself for doing this continuously. P5's strategies consisted of:</p>
<p>whether it was thinking about his kindness and how I needed to practice patience,</p>	<p>1) focusing on this person's kindness and on her own need to improve her patience skills,</p>
<p>or seeing him as a Buddha</p>	<p>2)seeing him as being a Buddha;</p>
<p>or seeing this situation as manifested by my spiritual guide to help me...</p>	<p>3)perceiving the situation as manifested by her spiritual guide to help her in her spiritual training;</p>
<p>seeing it in terms of emptiness and part of that was...I felt like "Oh, but this really is annoying unlike some things I or other people get annoyed at. This...anybody would say this situation is annoying!" and then I'd think "That's not true, that's just your own conclusion that you're coming to"</p>	<p>4)seeing the ultimate nature of the situation, its emptiness of inherent characteristics independent from her own perception. P5 had some difficulty doing this because she had the recurrent feeling of the situation itself being annoying rather it being her perception of it. P5 used lines of reasoning such as what annoys one person might not annoy the next, remembering that this was her conclusion and not the truth about the situation;</p>
<p>and I don't really know what anybody else who was there was thinking but I was telling myself "No-one else is annoyed by this, it's just you" and...</p>	<p>5)Although P5 did not know what others were thinking at the time she would tell herself she was the only person getting annoyed at this situation.</p>
<p>and so I had a lot of success trying to battle this delusion that came...it went from the beginning pretty much until the end but...</p>	<p>P5 is pleased with herself and considers she was successful fighting the delusion of annoyance which lasted from beginning to end of the retreat.</p>
<p>and I would manage to pacify it for a while and then it would come back...</p>	<p>P5 would manage to control the annoyance but it would arise again and this went on</p>

<p>and I've never had a retreat, really, that had anything like that but my teacher said "Actually that sounds like a very good retreat "because, especially because I didn't give up, and just say "I'm annoyed, this is just, definitely an annoying situation and it's all his fault and all that"..."</p>	<p>continuously during the whole duration of the retreat.</p> <p>Previous to this P5 had never experienced this level of recurrent annoyance on any retreat. P5 may have developed the thought it had not been a good retreat but P5's teacher later praised her for her retreat. P5's teacher praised her especially for not giving up or giving into the thought of the situation being annoying and blaming the other person for that experience of annoyance.</p>
<p>and I kept trying to find these different angles and I did feel like "This is the real test of what I've been studying" (smiled and looked pleased)</p>	<p>P5 considered this situation to be the real practical test of what she has been studying in her foundation study programme with her Buddhist teacher. P5 is pleased about herself for her performance.</p>
<p>and...and I did have...I did feel that my concentration got better</p>	<p>P5's concentration improved during the retreat.</p>
<p>and that there's something very special about that place where a lot of people have meditated and so it has a certain kind of energy and..</p>	<p>P5 values the retreat centre for its special characteristics such as its energy and the fact that many other retreaters have meditated on the same place.</p>
<p>having other people there who are also very concentrated helps, helps provide this good environment for meditating and...</p>	<p>P5 found that the presence of other people engaging in mediation as a group is a conducive condition for developing concentration and provides good environment for meditating.</p>
<p>and venerable Tarchin's whole presence is very quite and in fact he whispers his whole teaching, there's a microphone so you can hear him but...he has this very quiet, very loving presence, so I..</p>	<p>P5 found the retreat master's presence to be very very quite and loving, whispering his teaching.</p>
<p>despite this annoyance that kept coming up I did have I did have a fair amount of peace</p>	<p>Despite the annoyance P5 experienced towards the specific situation mentioned previously she experienced peace on retreat in general.</p>
<p>and I did feel like I gained a greater understanding of...of the text we were studying. And I loved his teachings and ...</p>	<p>P5 gained greater understanding of the text the retreat was on and felt very positive about the retreat master's teachings.</p>
<p>it was very pleasant being there, the conditions are very nice and it was...</p>	<p>For P5 the conditions at the retreat centre are good and the location is very beautiful.</p>
<p>he encouraged us to go for walks between</p>	<p>The retreat master advised the retreaters on</p>

sessions and saying that it was really important to keep our winds moving or we would stagnate and then when we came back to session that our minds would be really dull and would tend toward sinking and we wouldn't be fresh and that was really good advice. He said "don't just meditate and read during the break, you need to go out and walk around" and some of the places on the grounds...there are these real "vistas" on clear days, and we got some clear days, that you can see out a few valleys away and my teacher had told me that that's also a way to take your winds out, to really look, to look at a view, that really takes your mind far away.

So don't misunderstand, it was a completely wonderful experience.

But I was and I tend to be a very quite person so it's not hard for me to be quite and to observe silence but I'm not...a lot of people said "Oh, I wish I could stay" or "I want to do a 3 year retreat, a solitary retreat" and.. someday I hope to do that because that's...it would be, especially as Geshe-la was saying today, once you've got to a certain point you need to do that to complete the path,

but I missed being able to laugh out loud and you...it helped that there were these shared conventions and it was understood that it was out of kindness that we weren't making noise or disturbing anybody else, so whatever good it was doing us to be silent, a lot of it was also consideration for others and even trying to be quite when you're moving around and..

you do become aware of a lot of other noises that you make, even setting the table or putting down your glass of water...unzipping your luggage, all of the sudden those kinds of noises sound much louder and, OK there's nothing I can do about these.

I: So, do you think you enjoyed yourself a lot not just going for walks and because of the peaceful environment but also because of the way you were able to deal with this mind of annoyance that kept coming up?

what to do in between sessions, what was good and useful such as going for walks so that the mind would be fresh to meditate and not tend towards mental sinking (falling into a sleepy state of mind not holding any particular object of meditation). P5 followed the retreat master's advice and also the indications she remembered from her teacher.

P5 had a wonderful experience on retreat despite any difficulties.

P5 tends to be very quite and does not have difficulty observing silence.

P5 however did not have the wish to stay on retreat for longer than the duration of the retreat like some of her fellow retreaters or other practitioners she's met.

P5 aspires to having this wish when she is ready and this is meaningful for her spiritual training.

P5 missed being able to laugh out loud but she could appreciate why she was observing silence.

For P5 the fact that the silence was explained as a kindness towards others, as not to disturb their retreat helped her observe it. P5 acknowledges she observed silence because of herself and out of consideration for others, because of the meaning of doing it.

P5 became more aware of the noises she made and she tried to avoid what she thought was avoidable.

*P5 arrived before the retreat and stayed for longer after the retreat. During this time P5 became acquainted with the people who live and work at the retreat centre, the resident community of Buddhist practitioners (the

P5: Oh! as much as I regret it was there but...yeah...I also, I arrived a day earlier so that I could start to get over my jet lag and...and got to know some of the people on the staff there. And then I had 2 quite days after the retreat was over when most of the people from the group retreat came to Manjushri for the ordination ceremony and they stayed and there were just a handful of us who stayed at Tharpaland and the residents and the teacher came down for a day but then they came back. And for me it was really good to be able to be in that quite environment but to talk to other people about Dharma and the people on the staff there, like the Admin and the EPC and the retreat co-ordinator but also the Ghompa co-ordinator and the cook, they're very wonderful people and they have a lot of experience and so they've seen a lot of different things happening with very serious meditators, so it was really good to learn what kinds of things came up for people and..

and also to see them serving people that...I was much more impressed with that than...with the people who I didn't have much interaction with because they were on solitary retreat but..

but the retreat coordinator is, she's the, kind of the arms and legs and interface with the worlds for the retreaters, so if they need anything, she gets it for them if it's something appropriate and...anyway, listen to her talk about the wisdom that that requires was...was really illuminating.

But...and there were some other solitary retreaters who'd been there for various lengths of time who were coming out of retreat so that they could come to the festival and they needed that transition time and so, Venerable Samten also participated in the retreat with us. And so here he is, this resident teacher of one of the biggest centres in England and he was sitting at venerable Tarchin's feet and being very humble like any other student there and then eating meals with us and after the retreat was over and we'd stopped observing silence, to be able to ask him questions and

Admin Director, Education Programme Coordinator, Retreat Coordinator, Meditation Room Coordinator, Cook).

P5 values this time spent in their company as she could learn things about retreat from their experience. Also P5 could hear about other people-s experiences because they have been in contact with very experienced meditators who have done retreat in this retreat centre. P5 recognizes them to be wonderful people and very experienced.

P5 valued watching the staff from the retreat centre at work serving others. P5 was more impressed by this than by the solitary retreaters whom she did not have much contact with.

P5 recognizes the retreat coordinator as the link between the retreaters and the outside world; her job is to ensure they have what they need and provide it for them. P5 admires her for her wisdom to distinguish what requests from the retreaters are appropriate to respond to and which aren't.

Some solitary retreaters who had been there for various lengths of time were coming out of retreat and took part in P5's group retreat as a transition from solitary retreat to going to the Buddhist festival where they would meet thousands of people.

P5 was impressed by the humble example shown by a senior teacher who was amongst them.

P5 feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to spend time with senior ordained practitioners who are or have been resident teachers and once out of silence be able to ask them questions.

the same with...to that degree with Gen Sangye. So he didn't participate in the group retreat but he started coming to meals towards the end and he was a resident teacher in a major centre in the US for 11 years and he was there to ask questions of and to talk to. So that was another, yes, an extra I wasn't expecting.

I: And how was it for you coming out of silence?

P5: Hu, it was like I said, it was a relief because...

Oh, I think I started to say that and I got sidetracked but...even-though we had this shared convention that we weren't going to interact with each other in all these ways, it still felt a little bit unfriendly and talking with people is a way...it's one of the main ways we show that we're being friendly, especially with people you don't know and so even-though we all knew why we were being silent sometimes it felt to me that I was being unfriendly to people and I wanted to at least wave or gesture at them or something like that. And...so I was happy when the silence was over (laughter) and we could do these things again.

And also I hadn't expected that, I thought that it was just going to be very easy because I don't tend to be a big talker and so...compared to people who are very outgoing, very eloquacious, who I've heard say they struggle having to keep with silence. In general not talking was OK.

Something else I noticed about being silent was that aside from that whole noise angle, that the discipline of it it's...it's really good training and so I found that it was a slight impulse to want to, not so much talk, but communicate with other people and saying "No, that's not appropriate" and then just "No, I don't do that" and then going the other

way was a similar kind of process to dealing with some delusions or something arises that you want to do something and your wisdom tells you "No, that's really not a good idea" either "it's just never a good idea"

*For P5 coming out of silence was a relief.

For P5 despite the shared conventions about observing silence she felt unfriendly towards others by being silent. P5 acknowledges she believes talking to others is a way of demonstrating friendliness.

P5 felt at times the wish to communicate even if non-verbally in order demonstrate being friendly.

P5 was pleased when they stopped observing silence and she could act friendly towards people.

P5 expected being silent to be very easy to her because she doesn't usually talk much but she was surprised as in fact it turned out not to be that easy for her. P5 had these expectations because of comparing herself with people who are more outgoing and that she heard some difficulty observing silence. P5 thus concluded for her it would be easier.

P5 became aware while on retreat of the discipline being silent requires and acknowledges this to be a good training. When feeling the wish to communicate to others P5 would tell herself that was not appropriate behavior.

For P5 the process of restraint implicit in the discipline used to remain silent is similar to the one used to deal with negative thoughts and emotions. P5 reflects on the similarities of the discipline to observe silence and that

<p>(laughter) or "it's not a good idea in this particular situation", "it's not appropriate" and so you stop yourself and so that thoughts of restraint it's...is...I hadn't thought about that at all before but it's like the same muscle being trained.</p> <p>I: So do you think that experience on retreat will help you also in your daily life? Working with that muscle like you said? P5: Yeah, well I think that's part of the reason that I had this experience on retreat, is that in my daily life I...my biggest delusion is more of a kind of laziness and I have trouble with it partly because there's a very physical kind of medical aspect to it, so I know that I need to rest but I also like to rest so I always have to figure out which it is, but off course everything has levels to it.</p> <p>But on this grosser level like the annoyance was at it's very easy to recognize and much more disturbing to my mind</p> <p>and my... my daily life tends to be pretty peaceful, especially at the moment I...I have to spend a fair amount of time at home with my dog because he's getting old and he's...he gets very anxious when we leave him alone and...</p> <p>and then at the Dharma Centre where it's very pleasant and so I don't, I don't have a lot of really difficult situations that often.</p> <p>I: that's unusual, somehow... P5: I know (laughter from me). Yes, so we've been taught that you can ask Dorje Shugden to provide more difficulty for you... I: Huhu... P5: But our teacher said you have to be a little bit careful because if you ask for it, you'll get it at some point and...</p>	<p>of dealing with negative thoughts and emotions. When dealing with negative thoughts or emotions a part of P5's mind is involved in the negative distorted mental pattern and another part which is wiser tries to take over. For P5 this is like a dialog between the two about what to do. P5 reflects that the thoughts of restraint are like a muscle being trained.</p> <p>*In P5's daily life her biggest delusion is a type of laziness. P5's medical condition requires her to rest and she could mistake this for laziness, the border is not very clear. P5 monitors herself to distinguish between the two and there are different levels to it.</p> <p>P5 compares the laziness with the annoyance and states the later is at a grosser, more superficial level thus being very easy to recognize. For P5 this was more directly disturbing to her mind than the laziness.</p> <p>P5's daily life is generally peaceful, she spends much time at home with her pet that is aging and gets anxious when left alone.</p> <p>P5's experience at the Buddhist Centre is also peaceful, same as at home. P5 concludes she does not have many difficult situations in her daily life to cope with.</p> <p>*P5 says she is aware practitioners can ask for a Deity who is a protector of the Buddhist teachings to provide them with difficult challenging situations for them to improve their spiritual practice by developing their good qualities. P5 and other students got the advice from her Buddhist teacher to be wary of they asks for because they will get it at some point in time.</p>
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it may be enough to say, if you really rely on Dorje Shugden, that the conditions he's providing you are just what you need and so I think...I think sometimes I must be a really weak practitioner because it seems...it doesn't seem like he's providing me with that many challenges but you can also say that that's my particular karma.

I: At the moment...

P5: At the moment. Exactly, yeah.

I: It seems like you did have challenges in your retreat...

P5: Yeah, yeah. Mainly that...that...that...one person that I have the karma, I have close karma with him already because, because we had seen each other at different festivals and kind of connected and...

but also the happen to be sitting next to me, because probably if I had been sitting further away from him I wouldn't have noticed these things...

Oh! I should tell you one other thing which was...so I was sitting...I was telling myself "you're the only one who's annoyed by this and in fact this is not even annoying" but toward the end several of us were eating a meal together and he said that he had gotten in trouble in his last retreat at Tharpaland because someone had complained about him because he was doing this and this and this..(smiles) and it was many of the things that he had been doing this time and I thought "wow, it never occurred to me to complain to somebody", I would...I can't imagine doing that...I saw this as, this is situation the that I am supposed to deal with..

and there was a period when I thought; sometimes you can try to decide if...is there something I should be telling this person? Because if somebody is a fairly advanced practitioner it can be a kindness to help them pointing out their flaws but you have to do it with a really pure motivation...

but I was glad well, he had already got this

For P5 if one relies on the Deity Protector then one believes the conditions one has are just about right for one to practice with. This leads P5 to think maybe she is a weak practitioner because she doesn't not experience many challenging situations in her life. But P5 mentions she can interpret the situation in other ways such as thinking this is her particular karma.

*P5 acknowledges the challenging situation during this retreat. P5 has a close connection with the other person involved in the situation.

P5 engages in counterfactual thoughts and wonders if she had been sitting further away from this person she may not have experienced the challenge on this retreat.

P5 realized other people in different retreats had been disturbed by the person who had disturbed her during the retreat. This was revealed by the person in question as he told fellow retreaters others had complained about his behavior in the past, the same behavior he had displayed in this retreat. The other people who had been disturbed had decided to adopt a strategy different to P5's, they had complained to the managers about it. This would have never occurred to P5, to complain about it to somebody else. P5 perceived the situation as something she was supposed to deal with.

P5 wondered at some point during the retreat if she should say something about the unwanted behavior directly to this person. P5 considers that if a person is an advanced practitioner than he or she will appreciate being told his or her flaws. P5 considers however that this needs to be done out of a pure motivation, concern for the other person and not for oneself due to annoyance at what he or she is doing.

P5 was glad this person had already got this

<p>feedback so...he still wasn't aware that he was doing some of those things</p> <p>but it also made me laugh to find out that...that he had done it before and that somebody else had complained about him and...so somebody had to talk to him and...</p> <p>I: how did you think...what did you think then about the way you reacted to it? P5: I felt a little bit better about it because there were two of us (laughter) who found him annoying.</p> <p>But I also...one of the other thoughts that kept arising was "but this really is annoying" and then I realized that I...I tend to...a lot of us tend to do this, that you...you do this, it's almost a kind of math like equation, that you say "maybe this one thing just...maybe just the heavy sighing alone wouldn't add up to anything. But when you put this and this and this and this, then that's a definitely...annoying." That the only, as some kind of formula, and that the only conclusion you come at is: annoyance; annoying person.</p> <p>and that's completely the opposite of what we're taught, which is that it comes from your mind and so you can add things up and what you would like it to add up to? You can make it be anything! And you can choose, you can choose what's most beneficial. And it's the complete opposite of it being fixed, like this is a 1 and this is a 3 and it adds up to very annoying or...</p> <p>and I know that I do the...that a lot of humans have that tendency to look for this kind of evidence and say "it's this", especially with the difficult situations like you've lost your job and you have bad health and well that definitely equals suffering or pain or unhappiness, actually, is what we think it adds up to and...and it's not the case, we can make it add up to whatever we want..</p>	<p>feedback and she didn't have to do it herself. Although P5 acknowledges that despite the feedback this person was still displaying the same behavior</p> <p>P5 found it amusing that somebody had experienced a similar situation to hers and had resolved to complain about it.</p> <p>*When she learned other people had been faced with the same person and struggled to cope with the situation P5 felt better for not being the only one to perceive the situation as annoying.</p> <p>P5 thought thoroughly about the situation and how she perceived the characteristic of annoyance to come from the situation side rather than being her own projection. P5 became aware of how she was arriving at the conclusion of the situation being annoying. P5 was using a sort of formula to add up the elements of the situation. Through reflection P5 came to realize her tendency to perceive things as being something independent from the way she perceives them to be, as if there was something from the side of the situation that made it be annoying.</p> <p>For P5 this way of perceiving things is opposite to the Buddha's teachings, that characteristics come from one's own mind and one can choose to perceive situations in any way one wants to. For P5 one can choose the most beneficial way of perceiving things. For P5 this has implications such as things not being predetermined and unchangeable.</p> <p>For P5 people tend to find it difficult to overcome the shared convention that things are fixed and there is a right way of perceiving them according to some kind of formula. P5 acknowledges this is especially difficult to overcome when one is faced with difficult situations. P5 states the tendency to perceive difficult situations as having one single possible result: suffering, unhappiness or pain. For P5 one can choose to perceive these situations differently.</p>
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<p>I: So do you think that you more aware of that during the retreat?</p> <p>P5: In a small way, it wasn't one of the main things I was working on but it's one of those things that gradually over time, little bits here and there, help chip away the original way of thinking "Yeah, conclusion: this" , rather that decide, decide what you want to do with this, do you want to try and learn something from the situation or do you just want to blame somebody? If you just want to blame somebody what good does that do to anybody?</p> <p>I: OK...</p> <p>P5: Yeah..</p> <p>I: I think we're coming to the end of it. Is there anything else you'd like to add?</p> <p>P5: (laughter) It's funny because I say I'm a quite person and in here...(laughter) I went on and on and on! Ah, let me think...well I think, I think for that particular retreat that was my experience.</p> <p>I: Lovely, thank you so much.</p> <p>P5: You're welcome.</p>	<p>*For P5 over time the usual way of perceiving things gives way to the way she has been taught according to the Buddhist teachings. For P5 this translates into replacing a way of perceiving things as being fixed for a way of realizing perception is a decision, deciding how to interpret situations in a way that emphasizes learning and growth rather than blaming others. P5 decided to abandoned her usual way and train in the way taught by Buddha because she there were no benefits in what she was doing.</p> <p>*P5 reflects she is usually a quiet person and during the interview she spoke continuously.</p>
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Participante 6

Meaning Units	Psychological Meaning
<p>I: So, could you describe for me the experience of being on that Lamrim meditation retreat up at Tharpaland?</p> <p>P6: Yeah. I mean, the thing I remember is that I really enjoyed being on a quite short retreat because I had been on the long retreat, the Vajrayogini retreat before and I found it quite difficult to be honest. I had many problems, many things coming up and I really enjoyed knowing that I was there only for one week and it kind of gave the space in my mind to really relax and just try and follow Venerable Tarchin's instructions.</p>	<p>P6 enjoyed the retreat. P6 was able to relax and focus on following the retreat master's instructions.</p> <p>P6 had had an experience of long retreat that had been difficult for her and during which she experience many problems. This Lamrim short retreat contrasted with P6's previous experience of the longer retreat. P6 felt positive about the length of this retreat being only a week.</p>
<p>So I felt like, from the beginning, I felt quite relaxed and quite light and that always helps, I find, to...to be in a retreat because,</p>	<p>P6 was able to engage on the retreat with a relaxed approach letting go of expectations. For P6 this attitude is helpful while on retreat.</p>
<p>I mean the main thing I find helpful in a</p>	<p>For P6 the outer conditions on retreat are</p>

<p>retreat is, you have like the outer conditions to help you concentrate on your mind and to really let everything settle down and really, you know, like really, all the distractions that you normally follow can just drop away and you can just tune in to what, well, Buddha finally says, so...</p>	<p>conducive to the improvement of her concentration. P6 experiences the retreat conditions allow her to disengage of the distractions she normally experiences in daily life. This in turn allows P6 to completely focus her attention on Buddhist teachings with full mindfulness.</p>
<p>at that time I remember I found it very easy to just follow the instructions and to just let myself be guided and...</p>	<p>It was easy for P6 at the time of the retreat to follow the retreat master's instructions and allow herself to be guided by him.</p>
<p>I always feel it depends very much on how smooth your mind is, how much you are open, how much you just, you know, have no objections; you just kind of go into it, plunge into it and see what comes.</p>	<p>For P6 being able to develop confidence in the retreat master and his guidance depends much on her internal state at the time. For P6 developing an internal attitude of openness, letting go of expectations and being gentle with herself. For P6 it is important to engage in retreat with this internal attitude as a complement to the external conditions she already mentioned as being conducive.</p>
<p>And I remember I felt that very easy and it's not always like, that's every retreat is different but...yeah, I remember I felt quite light, quite nice...</p>	<p>P6 has some retreat experience, she has engaged in other retreats previous to this one. For P6 every retreat experience is different and unique. For P6 this Lamrim one was a positive and pleasant experience.</p>
<p>I: So you would have retreats where you'd have sort of a different experience in contrast to this one. P6: Oh yeah (laughter) yeah, yeah! Very different experience. I mean, especially that one retreat I did, the Vajrayogini retreat and...I just had had my first Highest Yoga Tantra empowerment, October, and I went into retreat I think it was December. So quite soon after I had the empowerment. And I didn't really know what I was doing, I didn't really know the Sadhana, I'd done it like twice or 3 times before...I don't even know why I went to that retreat to be honest (laughter). \</p>	<p>*P6 has had other retreat experiences which were not experienced as being pleasant at the time. In particular P6 mentions a longer retreat which was difficult for her. Contributing to the difficulty experienced were factors such as: at the time P6 had not much knowledge of the retreat subject, P6 was not familiar with the meditation practices carried out during the retreat, P6-s motivation for engaging on retreat was not entirely clear to her.</p>
<p>Just thought "it's a good idea to go there and I love venerable Tarchin and I love Tharpaland, so..."and, and I thought, you know, that's a good way of getting familiarity but...</p>	<p>P6 went on that retreat because> she felt fondly towards the retreat master she felt positively about the retreat centre she wanted to gain experience and familiarity with the specific meditation practices the retreat was on.</p>
<p>I was there and just, I mean just my usual pattern of being, just became so obvious!</p>	<p>During the long retreat P6 became very aware of her usual mental patterns of being,</p>

<p>I think that was, that is what retreats normally do, they just let all your patterns become so obvious; I mean we call it delusions.</p>	<p>the way she experienced things in general.</p> <p>For P6 there is a characteristic common to retreats> she experiences increased levels of awareness of her own mental patterns, thoughts and emotions. P6 gains greater insight as to her way of being in the world and experiencing it; specifically P6's awareness of her own negative thoughts and emotions become greater.</p>
<p>And it's just much more easy to, well perhaps not at the beginning, to see!</p>	<p>For P6 on retreat it's easier to become aware of her negative thoughts and emotions when compared to her experience of daily life. P6 clarifies however that this ease may come with retreat experience and may not be present in one's experience since the beginning.</p>
<p>Just to...you're just inside your delusions so much more, just...well because the distraction are far away, you can't run away and you can't pretend there's something outside of you happening but it's just obvious that is juts your mind going wild and..</p>	<p>On retreat P6 feels she experiences her negative thoughts and emotions with more awareness. For P6 this happens due to the absence of distractions that could function as an escape for her. As a result P6 thus feels she can't avoid uncomfortable thoughts or emotions. P6 is also unable to attribute the cause of her discomfort to be external to her. As a conclusion, for P6 on retreat it becomes clear that the cause of her discomfort is internal, it is within her own mental experience.</p>
<p>I: so you were aware of your mental patterns manifesting? P6: Hum? I: So you're very aware of your mental... P6: well, I wasn't really, I mean, I was...it was just painful at the beginning...Oh well, not in the beginning but it started pretty soon to become very very painful and...</p>	<p>*P6 became gradually aware of her own mental patterns during the long retreat although she was not completely aware when the retreat started. For P6 this was a painful process.</p>
<p>I mean my main pattern was mainly, I don't know, just pushing and then thinking "I have to do this correctly" or... I don't know, it's very difficult to describe, you know, what's going on in your mind</p>	<p>P6 on the long retreat identified her main pattern of thought to be an attitude of pushing herself beyond her limits and holding perfectionist thoughts.</p>
<p>but I was just very very tired and very anxious and...I don't know, I mean, perhaps also it manifests in so many different ways like for example I didn't know what to do in the practice, I was very tight because I didn't have a clue really and,</p>	<p>P6 experienced feelings of tiredness, anxiety and tightness. Contributing to this was the fact that P6 was not familiar with the meditation practices she was engaging on that retreat. For P6 this lack of knowledge and familiarity with the meditation practices</p>

I mean, some people would just relax and say "Oh well, this is boring, I'll just go along or fall asleep or.." whatever and I was just, you know, tight to do it well, which you know, is probably just the worst thing you can do because it's this kind of school mentality where you try to have results and you try to accomplish something and...

I mean I had been through tough times the years before and things like that and my relationship had ended and whatever but...

I think the main pattern was just not being able to relax and to just, you know, see what happens and to just be there, be happy and not have any expectation whatsoever and I couldn't manage to do that so, the whole experience of being on retreat was just quite painful, I just wasn't used to...

I mean, in the beginning I remember that I was even...like I couldn't understand that so many things were coming up in my mind, like just memories, very unimportant things like places I had been to and, you know, whatever...and it was just like, I didn't understand why that was, you know, in my mind because I was supposed to be doing a retreat on Vajrayogini (laughter). I was sitting thinking about I don't know what and...

And then I got lung and then...and...which was quite a painful experience and as I didn't know what it was I freaked out even more and I tried to do something about it and I tried to understand why it was happening and what I could do better to make it not happen and I was just...you know too much in my head, just thinking all the time and... Yeah, it was quite a difficult time, so...

and her own wish for perfection led her to feel uncomfortable.

P6 compares her reaction to the imagined reactions of others. P6 fantasizes that other people if experiencing the same external situation could have had a reaction different to hers: getting bored at the situation; not engaging in the practice or even falling asleep.

P6's reflection implies her awareness that the same external situation could generate different reactions from different people. P6's reaction was that of wanting to do the right thing, having a perfect performance focusing on the desired outcome. P6 reflects on how her attitude is probably a cause for her unpleasant experience, the attitude of focusing too much on obtaining results.

P6 was experiencing difficulties in her personal life at the time of the long retreat.

P6 reflects that her main thought pattern during the long retreat was focusing too much on the desired outcome and having too high expectations of her performance. Thus P6 was unable to focus on the process and enjoy herself maintaining a relaxed attitude. P6 reflects on how this attitude led her to a painful experience on retreat.

At the beginning of the long retreat P6 was experiencing many thoughts that consisted mainly of memories from the past. These thoughts were functioning as a distraction for P6 as they were completely unrelated to the meditation objects she knew she should be focusing on. Further P6 was confused as to why she was having this experience.

P6 had an unpleasant painful experience on the long retreat which she could not make sense of at the time. This unpleasant experience consisted of a problem, an internal state that has physical and mental consequences, that can occur for meditators while on retreat preventing them from successfully engaging on meditation. P6's reaction to this situation was one of

	<p>trying to figure it out, trying to deal with the situation in a rational way, intellectual, trying to reason and understand why this was happening and what she could do to improve her situation and prevent pain. P6 reflects on how her reaction was excessive, thinking too much, rationalizing too much and how this led to the experience becoming more unpleasant and painful.</p>
<p>I: So this time you could just relax and do all that you're saying that you couldn't do in that previous one? P6: Yeah! Probably, yeah.</p>	<p>*P6's experience of the short Lamrim retreat contrasted to her experience of the long retreat. The short one was much more pleasant and she could put into practice the resolutions she intended for the first one.</p>
<p>Because, I mean, I saw...I mean, I never had the feeling that retreat was the problem, you know, I never had a negative mind toward retreat.</p>	<p>P6 reflects she didn't perceive at any time retreat to be the problem or cause of her painful experience. P6 never developed negative thoughts or emotions towards retreat. P6 was aware the causes for her unpleasant experience were internal rather than external.</p>
<p>And somebody had told me, you know, that well sometimes long retreats are difficult and then, you know, you enjoy in short retreats. So I had some hope (laughter)</p>	<p>P6 had been told about the possibility of experiencing difficulties while engaging in long retreat and that in contrast short retreat could be experienced as more pleasant. P6 thus had positive expectations this could be true.</p>
<p>and I wanted to try again and I had that determination not to put any pressure on myself, you know?</p>	<p>P6 was also motivated to attempt engaging on retreat again. P6 was further determined to learn from past experience of the long retreat. Practically P6 on this short retreat would attempt to focus more on the process disregarding desired outcomes /results/ expectations.</p>
<p>So I really went there and just though "OK, I'm doing a special holiday and I want to feel good and I want to relax and I want to enjoy".</p>	<p>P6 then engaged on this short retreat with an attitude of amazement /awesomeness at the special opportunity she had, thinking of retreat as a special holiday during which she would relax and enjoy.</p>
<p>And you now I just went for walks and every...between all the sessions and it was beautiful I mean, I just...I had worked very hard before in the centre and stuff so...I was so happy to be out in the nature and I walked all the paths up and down, you know?</p>	<p>During the short retreat P6 went for walks in the session breaks and this was a very pleasant part of the experience. P6 had been working hard for the Buddhist centre where she attends classes and group meditations before the retreat and this contributed for her to value her time out in the nature during the</p>

<p>And I was...I mean; it was different from the other retreat because there were no boundaries, you know? We could walk wherever we wanted, we could, you know, do whatever we want, and we could miss any session we wanted.</p>	<p>retreat breaks.</p> <p>P6 reflects on how this experience of being on short retreat contrasted with the experience of the long retreat also due to the different level of restrictions and commitments associated to it. The short retreat was much less strict than the long one; it did not have physical boundaries that could not be crossed; P6 could also miss sessions. This might have eased P6-s perfectionist thoughts leading her to be more gentle with herself.</p>
<p>And once you have that freedom in your mind, you know, you know? "I'm totally free to do whatever I want"</p>	<p>P6 reflects on how having the knowledge about these conditions and keeping in mind the contrast enabled her to maintain a much more relaxed attitude during the short retreat.</p>
<p>and that gives you so much space to know "I do this because I want it" and then there's no pressure, you know?</p>	<p>On the short retreat P6's motivation for engaging on retreat was very clear to her and also the fact that submitting herself to retreat conditions was something she has previously decided she wanted to do and it was also something she valued. P6 did not experience any pressure in contrast with her first experience.</p>
<p>All the pressure falls away because you just enjoy and I mean, that's a joy,</p>	<p>P6 didn't experience pressure during the short retreat and she was able to experience it as a pleasurable experience. P6 reflects on how this came about as a result of her change of attitude in retreat.</p>
<p>what greater joy could there be than listening to venerable Tarchin's voice and being inspired by him?</p>	<p>P6 enjoyed, felt positive about the teachings of the retreat master. P6 felt inspired by the retreat master.</p>
<p>Than having it so easy to generate, you know, good minds, when at home you sit there and try, try, try, nothing happening, you know?</p>	<p>P6 enjoyed having greater ease when meditating and generating positive minds on retreat. This contrasts with P6's experience of meditation in her daily life. On retreat P6 finds it easier to generate positive minds as opposed to trying to do the same alone in her house.</p>
<p>And there, you know, you just try to be influenced by all those people and be encouraged by others doing the same thing, you know...</p>	<p>P6 enjoyed being affected and influenced by the group dynamics. P6 felt positively about being influenced by having other people around her engaging in the same meditations and observing retreat conduct. This functioned to increase P6-s motivation.</p>

<p>I: So this time you were much more certain of why you were on retreat. P6: Yeah. Although I think, yeah! I mean, it's always a personal decision isn't it, I mean, why you are on retreat. There's not "a" reason to be on retreat,</p>	<p>*P6's motivation for engaging on retreat was clearer to her when engaging in the short retreat. However P6 reflects there are never right or wrong reasons to engage in retreat. P6 considers the decision to go on retreat a personal one that can be made depending on personal circumstances and that will differ in every moment in time.</p>
<p>I think and depending on what your strongest delusion is, you know, then retreat can fulfill all kinds of different things probably,</p>	<p>P6 considers going on retreat can fulfill different goals for different people. This will also depend on what their most predominant mental pattern of thoughts or emotions is.</p>
<p>I mean, yeah, OK, in the end it's all about finding inner peace but...</p>	<p>For P6 however many different motivations one can have to engage in retreat there is an underlying motivation common to them all: finding inner peace.</p>
<p>for me, my main pattern, you know, obstructing or whatever, being the main obstruction for my practice, would be pushing.</p>	<p>For P6 the main reason for engaging on retreat at present is to overcome what she has identified as her main obstruction to her spiritual practice. P6 has identified this to be her mental pattern of thoughts of perfectionism and being focused on results (expectations of a certain desired outcome).</p>
<p>So for me the main reason to go to a retreat would be not to try to be a "goody, goody" you know, not trying to...whatever...fulfill everything,</p>	<p>P6-s motivation for engaging in retreat is also to train in opposing her mental pattern of having high expectations of herself and of her performance aiming at being perfect. P6 tries instead to not to be focused on attaining results.</p>
<p>just trying to have a good time</p>	<p>P6 tries to focus on the process and on the feeling of joy.</p>
<p>and realizing the best way to have a good time is to practice Lamrim, that's what Geshe-la said during spring festival , didn't he? He says you know "enjoy you life practicing Lamrim" or something (laughter).</p>	<p>P6 on retreat trains according to the understanding that the best method for enjoying herself is to practice the Buddha's teachings on how to transform every daily activity into the spiritual path.</p>
<p>I: Can you tell me more about practicing Lamrim then? P6: Yeah. First of all my Lamrim practice, my formal practice, is not good at all, like...</p>	<p>*P6 does not consider her formal practice of Lamrim to be good, this could mean her daily meditation sessions in daily life are not in accordance wit her expectations of what they should be like.</p>
<p>I mean, I try to bear in mind that Lamrim is like the foundation for my whole practice</p>	<p>P6 has the intention to be at all times mindful that the Buddha-s teachings on how to transform daily activities into the spiritual path are the basis for her spiritual practice.</p>

and I think I kind of have a feeling that the most important thing, like Geshe-la says, is to you know cherish others and to, as he said today, to do that with wisdom and compassion and I think I really, really believe that, you know?

But for me often formal practice is quite...quite difficult. Like I find it quite difficult to seat down, to discipline myself and so forth.

But I find that Geshe-la is very encouraging, to say you know, you can practice any time

and it's very important that we keep that in mind, that we can generate positive minds towards our self, towards other people, then all the time no matter what we do.

So for me the main meaning of Lamrim is a method to improve myself, a method to become a purer person, a method to become...yeah, a happy person, to find inner peace

and I understand that, you know, those 21 meditations that we get from Geshe-la or from Je Tsongkhapa, they're the supreme method, you know, to accomplish that.

If I would, you know, if I would practice them on a daily basis then I know, if I have, you know, a meditation object in my mind, you know, like cherishing others or patience, it's the best protection from all suffering and I'm totally confident that this is the truth.

But I always wonder why I don't do this!

P6 has faith, confidence in her spiritual guide-s advice on the importance of considering other-s happiness important, developing a feeling and attitude of appreciation for others. For P6 it is important to act in accordance with this combining the good qualities of both wisdom and compassion.

P6 finds it difficult to be disciplined in daily life as to maintain a formal practice of sitting meditation daily.

P6 finds motivation and inspiration in her spiritual guide and his advice on engaging in spiritual practice at all times, integrating her daily experience with her spiritual path.

P6 considers very important to always remember that the way to integrate the spiritual practice with her daily activities is to hold positive feelings and attitudes towards her self and others independently of what she might be doing.

For P6 the mains meaning of the Lamrim Buddhist practice is that it is a method for improving her self, experiencing also greater happiness and inner peace.

P6 believes the method of the 21 Lamrim meditations to be the best one for accomplishing her goal.

P6 has complete confidence in Lamrim as a method for accomplishing her wish to be happy. For P6 this method put into practice implies maintaining the meditation object in mind at all times. The meditation object chosen can be anyone of the 21 Lamrim meditation objects.

For P6 suffering can be overcome by focusing on objects such as patience or cherishing others. For P6 applying this method consistently everyday functions to protect her from an experience of suffering which is recognized as being internal.

P6 has doubts has to why she does not

<p>(laughter) but I mean, Geshe-la gives us all the answers so, you know, the answer is just not enough familiarity, you know?</p>	<p>engage in this method at all times as she would like to. P6-s spiritual guide explains familiarity is needed in order to increase one's capacity of following this method.</p>
<p>Just too many distractions, not enough motivation or clear understanding of the advantages of Lamrim and so forth.</p>	<p>P6 identifies obstacles to developing familiarity with practicing Lamrim: too many distractions; not enough motivation; not having a clear understanding of the advantages of the method others.</p>
<p>But still sometimes I wonder, you know, I seem to understand something and I wonder "why am I not putting it into practice more than I am?" but again, I think he's so patient with us and I think we have to be very patient with us too, you know,</p>	<p>Even being aware that what stands between her and the perfect performance of practicing Lamrim is lack of familiarity P6 sometimes experiences difficulty due her own inability in putting the teachings into practice. For P6 her spiritual guide functions as the source of resolution for her internal conflict. P6 mentions the spiritual guide is very patient with his students and from this she learns to be patient with her self.</p>
<p>by not putting any pressure but just understanding "OK, I can only try the best now and that's all I can do, just try to do now what I can, try to learn to be good, try to understand things don't exist although they appear to exist" and, yeah, just improving like that, every day every day, trying, trying...</p>	<p>P6 cultivates an attitude of trying to do her best at all times and improve gradually and continuously with consistent training. P6 mentions the emptiness teaching as an example.</p>
<p>and I feel that although, you know, I have many obstacles and whatever but I feel that I'm never really separate from Lamrim, like once you hear it, once you're confident that it's true, you're never really separate because you know deep in your heart, you know it's true and...So, I feel it. I feel it's...</p>	<p>Whatever difficulties P6 might experience she always remains confident in Lamrim as a method for solving her problems.</p>
<p>I feel it's true that it's like the basic foundation of what we have to do and nothing else will ever work without Lamrim.</p>	<p>For P6 Lamrim is the basis for her Buddhist practice and serves as a basis upon which to engage in other Buddhist practices.</p>
<p>Because it's so true, without loving other people how can we ever be happy? It's just obvious anyway...yeah, I think...</p>	<p>P6 is confident that happiness depends on holding feelings of love for others, considering them to be important and their happiness to be important. For P6 it is impossible to be happy without this.</p>
<p>I: and what's it like when you're training those meditations in your retreat away from distractions?</p>	<p>*For P6 training in Lamrim while on retreat is an opportunity to gain more experience and on a different more profound level as well.</p>

<p>P6: I think it's just an opportunity to deepen your experience because,</p> <p>I think mostly because you make a strong determination that "that is what I'm going to do"</p> <p>I think if I would be able to make that strong determination in my daily life, you know, just one day, say "OK, today I'm thinking about emptiness all the time" then perhaps I could almost have an experience like in a retreat. But the thing is, somehow we are not able to make a strong determination everyday,</p> <p>so a retreat almost gives you the opportunity to make the strong determination, OK because you saying "I take a special time out" and that helps you to make a strong determination to do something different from what you're normally doing.</p> <p>And what I'm normally doing is following my distractions.</p> <p>So the thing I do differently is not follow my distractions as best as I can and,</p> <p>well, I mean, all the conditions in a retreat centre like Tharpaland or any other case and retreat centre just help you to develop those minds, you know?</p> <p>And for example being silent is just so helpful because talking, you know, you can't talk without gross conceptual minds probably (laughter) before you're a Buddha! (laughter) then perhaps it's possible, I don't know but</p>	<p>When going on retreat P6 self motivates herself intensely as to engage in the retreat practices and meditations. For P6 this level of self motivation and determination makes the experience different and special.</p> <p>P6 reflects on the possibility of bringing her retreat experience into her daily life. P6 understands the importance of her own level of determination and self motivation to make the retreat experience special. P6 is aware that if these conditions were maintained during daily life her daily experience wouldn't differ from retreat experience in that she would be able to remain mindful of meditation objects throughout the day, every day. Thus for P6 it is characteristic of retreat to emphasize contemplation and mindfulness of certain meditation objects during the whole day, every day. In daily life P6 is not able of maintaining such strong determination motivating her self in the same way due to different conditions.</p> <p>In contrast going on retreat provides her with the opportunity, conducive conditions and time. For P6 the fact that she changes her routine and perceives the retreat opportunity as something different than usual helps her generate intense levels of self motivation to train herself.</p> <p>P6 is aware that her usual experience in daily life is characterized by mentally being distracted.</p> <p>On retreat P6 trains continuously not to follow her distractions to the best of her ability.</p> <p>For P6 says the conditions in a retreat centre such as the one in question are conducive to help her avoid distractions.</p> <p>For P6 being silent is one of the conducive conditions of the retreat centre. For P6 this is helpful for her spiritual training because when talking people usually experience having gross conceptual</p>
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before that, you know, talking alone invites gross conceptual thoughts or the other way around, I don't know, I'm not sure...

but silence just helps you to shut down all those minds, you know, that just make you suffer all day long.

Because, I mean, most of the thoughts we have are not positive, they don't lead us in the right direction, they're not thoughts of, you know, loving-kindness, wisdom,

but they're just thoughts about, you know, what do we have to do, what we should have done, what we're doing tomorrow, what...you know? What we're going to eat, whatever...and then those thoughts normally make us not peaceful, but...you know? Either excited or anxious or...

and the...the silence just helps to shut down a bit, to let go, just enjoy your own mind.

and once you come into that rhythm you have one session, you gain a little bit of experience, come out of the session, you try to keep silent...

thoughts. These gross conceptual thoughts include objects of attachment, anger and ignorance and are opposite to the meditation objects P6 is training to familiarize herself with. P6 reflects that enlightened beings, Buddhas, have the ability to engage in actions of speech without their minds being disturbed by gross conceptual thoughts. P6 also reflects that perhaps even before attaining enlightenment this is possible but not in her level of practice yet.

P6 recognizes negative conceptual thoughts as a cause of suffering. While observing silence the conceptual thoughts decrease in intensity and frequency. P6 temporarily experiences liberation from this particular suffering.

For P6 the majority of the thoughts she experiences are not positive ones that cause her to experience happiness but on the contrary are negative ones that lead to an experience of suffering. Positive thoughts are identified as loving/kindness and wisdom for instance. It is not so much the fact that thoughts are conceptual that is perceived as a cause of suffering but rather their content not being positive.

Distractive thoughts that are liable to occur are identified, such as:
conceptual thoughts about the past,
conceptual thoughts about the future,
counterfactual thinking,
basic needs such as food,
etc.
These thoughts are experienced as a source of anxiety, excitement or other feelings leading to an experience of suffering, opposite to inner peace.

For P6 remaining silent helps disengage from the distractive thoughts and thus enjoy the inner peace in her own mind.

On retreat P6 is silent and engages in a routine of meditation session and meditation break continuously leading to a certain rhythm. This is experienced as positive and conducive to a gradual increase of personal experience on the meditation objects.

<p>Oh well... you keep silent but you try to be mindful of your object of meditation</p> <p>and then it's really like it's building on to that. And you come back to the meditation and your mind is already smoother and it's more able to find the object of meditation and your experience of those states of mind that are just peaceful are much more deeper and easier to gain...</p> <p>so I think that's the main point of retreat, that...you just longer time to go deeper in inner peace and then...a stronger determination to keep that inner peace, that, you know...</p> <p>I: I wonder, those distractions you're mentioning, if they come up in retreat what do you do with them? P6: I mean, depends. There's many many different methods to deal with distraction.</p> <p>I found one of the most powerful methods is, like venerable Tarchin said at the beginning of the retreat that distractions are our main enemy because they're the opposite to peace...to peace of mind, opposite to concentration, to meditation.</p> <p>And understanding that everything that comes up in my mind that is not, you know, my object of meditation is a distraction, just you know? Just clearly seeing that no matter how interesting, how important it seems to be, to just recognize it as my worst enemy and then just forget, you know? Just decide "I'm not interested. That's not what I'm doing at the moment" you know? "I can think about it later, not now"</p> <p>and it's coming back to the determination, isn't it? Because the stronger your determination not to follow your distractions, the easier you recognize them, the easier it is for you not to</p>	<p>While observing silence P6 is engaging in maintaining mindfulness of the meditation object of meditation in between meditation sessions. Although P6 is silent she is nevertheless internally active in her spiritual training.</p> <p>Reaming silent and mindful of the meditation object during the meditation breaks helps P6 to improve her experience during the meditation sessions. For P6 this is conducive to making progress, this is monitored according to the following indicators: the mind being smoother, more ability in finding the meditation object, greater familiarity with inner peace, deeper levels of personal experience.</p> <p>For P6 the main characteristics of retreat are: having more time to go deeper into inner peace, having a stronger motivation to maintain her experience of inner peace.</p> <p>*P6 has many different methods of dealing with distractions on retreat.</p> <p>A method that best works and is effective for P6 is to recall the words of the retreat master stating that distraction is her enemy because it is the opposite to mental peace and concentration, meditation.</p> <p>If any thoughts occur that are unrelated to the meditation object P6 will: 1) identify them as being harmful an inappropriate at that time, she tells herself she can engage in them later, 2) ignore them, not engage or follow them independently of how important or interesting they might appear to be.</p> <p>For P6 the higher the level of motivation she has generated the easier it will be to identify distractions and not to engage in them.</p>
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be interested in following them.

And for me, I mean, it helps to know that I'm following my distractions 24/7 anyway and I can just tell myself "OK, now 1 hour I'm not! It's not very much." just to know that for a little short while I'm doing something different and then be happy with that and just know...

I mean, for me also knowing that I'm doing it for others, even in that case, you know?

I mean Buddha says, you know "Bodhichitta is the strongest mind you can ever have"

and sometimes in meditation I really, you know, get a little experience of why that is the case because sometimes when you feel, you know, "I don't want to be distracted" it has some power, but if you think "OK, if I really ever want to help anybody I have to gain some experience" you know? "I have to gain some experience of inner peace and if I want to gain some experience I have to stop my distractions" and then it can be much more powerful because, you know, OK, all those people, if I ever want to help them, I'm not listening to my distractions now in order to sometime in the future be helpful, be of help to others. And then sometimes it helps, it can be much more powerful, yeah.

And also, I mean, for me, always in school, you know, even when I was in school and so forth, I always had a wish not to waste my time, like sitting at school I thought "OK, I can do whatever but, you know, OK if I'm here I might as well, you know, do something meaningful".

I mean sometimes it was like listening to the teaching and participating, sometimes it was like "OK, I'll just do something else" (laughter) but you know, whatever it is, just,

P6 sets SMART goals for herself dividing time in little time units such the length of a meditation session or break. It is also helpful for P6 to remind herself that she follows distractions all the time out of retreat and she motivates herself in that way to not do that while on retreat.

P6 also derives motivation from thinking she refrains from following distractions not only for her own benefit but also for the benefit of others.

P6 has confidence in Buddha when he said that Bodhichitta, a mind that wishes to liberate others from suffering permanently and give them everlasting happiness and which understands that to accomplish this needs to attain enlightenment, is the strongest mind of all.

P6 sometimes gets to experience the effects of the Bodhichitta personally with some intensity while meditating. While engaging in meditation and experiencing distraction P6 finds it is more efficient to overcome it by generating an altruistic motivation. P6 recognizes the best way to help others is to teach them how to develop inner peace. P6 is therefore aware that in order to benefit others in this way she needs to overcome her own distractions and develop herself a personal experience of inner peace.

P6 has always had the wish not to waste her time and has always wanted to derive meaning from engaging in whatever actions she engages in.

For P6 deriving meaning from actions she engages in could result from engaging in whatever is expected of her. However it could also result from engaging in something

<p>you know, I never really wanted to be there and just waste my time, you know? Either I would not go there or, you know, do something but...</p>	<p>else that she finds more meaningful.</p>
<p>I just, yeah, I just never wanted to waste my time and I think in retreat it's much easier to...to have that feeling of how precious the opportunity is</p>	<p>For P6 is easy to derive meaning from being on retreat and to have a special recognition sense of doing something meaningful and rare.</p>
<p>because I know how bad my concentration normally is, you know?</p>	<p>P6 sees retreat as a good opportunity for improving her concentration.</p>
<p>I know how many difficulties I have to motivate myself to meditate and whatever. And when I'm in retreat I really think "OK, now I have to make the best out of it" and because it's not very often that I'm in retreat then it's easier, you know?</p>	<p>P6 sees retreat as a good opportunity for improving her level of motivation to engage in meditation. On retreat P6 maintains a special recognition of her opportunity being meaningful and she generates a wish to make the most of it to the best of her ability. For P6 the fact that engaging on retreat is an extraordinary activity in which she does not perform often contributes to this special recognition.</p>
<p>It's just easier than on a daily basis, I find. I mean I could say that for me it's the daily basis (laughter) but, yeah it's easier in retreat yeah... I: So is it very different, your experience with your meditation when you're in retreat or in your daily life? P6: Yeah, I mean you can have very good experiences in your daily life but...</p>	<p>For P6 it is easier to engage in meditation while on retreat in contrast to daily life. P6 can have good experiences in her daily life meditating though.</p>
<p>I mean for me the main difference is also when it is guided or not and...</p>	<p>For P6 it makes a big difference to her meditation having somebody else guiding it or not.</p>
<p>I don't have much experience with not, you know, non-guided retreats. So, I think for me, you know, doing a retreat that is not guided would be quite difficult too</p>	<p>P6 does not consider herself to be a very experienced meditator as far as non guided meditation are concerned. For this reason P6 believes it would be difficult to engage in a solitary retreat.</p>
<p>and most of my sessions in my daily life are not guided, like I go to TTP now and, you know, we have guided meditations there and I can gain some experience too but...</p>	<p>In P6's daily life she has to engage in meditation on her own without the guidance from another and this is difficult for her. The exceptions are the classes she has on the teacher training program that allow her to gain some experience because another person is guiding the meditations.</p>
<p>a guided retreat it's just special because it's</p>	<p>For P6 guided retreats are special because</p>

<p>so...yeah, because it makes...you make a special thing out of it, I mean in the end it always comes back to your own mind, doesn't it? It's just because we make retreat special that it is special for us. If we wouldn't think of anything special then it wouldn't be special.</p>	<p>she perceives them as being special. P6 acknowledges the role her perception plays in making retreats special.</p>
<p>I could probably say "OK, TTP is very special and I gain deep experiences" but sometimes you develop ordinary views and then it just doesn't, yeah, just isn't special anymore.</p>	<p>P6 reflects that she could perceive her TTP classes as being something special to her but because she is used to them she no longer perceives them as being so special.</p>
<p>I mean, I remember at the beginning when I was for the first time on TTP, it was very very special, you know?</p>	<p>P6 remembers when she first started attending TTP (teacher training program) classes she perceived them as being very special because she would remember to cultivate that view.</p>
<p>I really try to see my teacher as a holy being who can give me, you know, supreme medicine and I received so many blessings, you know?</p>	<p>At the time P6 made an effort to focus on the special attributes of her teacher and the teachings and she feels she derived great benefit from holding this view.</p>
<p>And after a while it just... (Laughter) ordinary view comes back and "oh...time for TTP..." (Like it's boring) and I kind of drag myself into the Ghompa and...</p>	<p>After some time P6 no longer focused on this view and TTP classes became something she experienced as not being out of the ordinary.</p>
<p>and then still the blessings come through and it's easier and, you know, and then your mind changes, you know, hopefully...</p>	<p>Despite this P6 still derives benefit and can monitor that she is improving in her mental training.</p>
<p>but, that's for retreat because you've made such an effort to get there, you paid the money, you take your time out, you already have a mind that is very positive towards it, you know? You wouldn't make such an effort if you wouldn't want to do it.</p>	<p>P6 reflects on some reasons which contribute for her perception of retreat as being special, these imply some kind of effort or cost: 1) the effort to travel to the retreat centre, 2) the money she needs to pay for engaging on retreat, 3) the time out from work she needs to take. P6 sees the above not only as contributing factors but also as external indicators of some initial level of motivation to engage in retreat.</p>
<p>So I think that's the main thing if you want to do it and if you have a positive mind towards something then we gain good experiences.</p>	<p>P6 reflects enjoyment of retreat as a positive experience is largely due to holding a positive mind towards the experience and focusing on its qualities.</p>
<p>I: So it gives you sort of... applying so much effort to go there, taking time out, you're</p>	<p>*P6 sees the effort she applies to go on retreat as an external indicator of her</p>

<p>much more... to make the most of it. P6: Yeah. I think at the end it's not just the effort but your effort is just, you know, a...just shows your determination, doesn't it? It's just like, almost like, I don't know out you say in English but...like incorporation or something, a manifestation of your effort... I: like an embodiment? P6: Yeah. Something like that.</p>	<p>motivation.</p>
<p>It's like if I have a strong motivation to go somewhere to receive teachings I'll do anything for it. If I don't have it, nothing.</p>	<p>P6 is aware of the power and importance of her motivation. If P6 is highly motivated to do something then she will do whatever it takes to do it. But if P6 on the contrary is not motivated then she won't do anything.</p>
<p>And if I have a strong motivation it helps me to not waste my time because it would be...you know, nobody really wants to do something that is totally uninterested in what they're doing. Either you want to do it and then you're interested or you don't want to do it.</p>	<p>P6 reflects that being highly motivated is something that depends on the perceived meaning of a certain activity. Thus recognizing something as meaningful leads to developing motivation to engage in it and once engaged in it it helps to prevent distraction.</p>
<p>And that's what I see in so many people, you know? When we generate a strong wish, you know, and then a strong intention, then experiences will come because we are so, we are open and we want it.</p>	<p>For P6 first comes the wish to do something as as it becomes clearer and more directed an intention arises. For P6 this leads at some point to having an experience of what is intended, due to ones-s openness to it.</p>
<p>Something, I mean, you still have that trap you fall into that you hold on to results, you know? But apart from that I think...</p>	<p>Still P6 is aware of the danger of focusing to much on attaining results and having too much expectation and how this can become an obstacle and should be avoided.</p>
<p>Geshe-la always says, you know, intention is the first thing. Practicing Dharma means having the intention to practice Dharma So without a strong intention nothing, nothing coming.</p>	<p>P6 has confidence in her Spiritual Guide's advice of always having an intention to practice the spiritual path. For P6 this is the meaning of practicing a spiritual path, at all times keeping the intention. P6 believes from this intention results will naturally come in time. P6 also believes without the intention she will never attain results.</p>
<p>I: And retreat does make it easier to remember that intention? P6: I think so, I think so. Because, just because it's something special, just because it's not everyday life, I think, you know?</p>	<p>*For P6 retreat makes it easier to maintain the intention of practicing a spiritual path because she perceives it as a special training opportunity, out of the ordinary.</p>
<p>If you would be in retreat forever, you know, for a long time probably we would make it ordinary at one point, you know?</p>	<p>P6 reflects on how perceiving things as special as to do with her own recognition and is an ability that can be trained. P6 is aware</p>

<p>Or if, you know, this festival would go on for weeks and weeks and weeks, we would probably be tired, we would, you know, we would wish to go home and just lie down and just have a rest and whatever.</p> <p>And that's just because our merit runs out, because positive karma to view something in a special manner is not there anymore and...</p> <p>So I think the most important thing is to always renew your intention because it doesn't just keep?? Up by itself, you know?</p> <p>I feel like always working on your intention is one of the most important things, always working on your wish to improve yourself, to gain experiences, to receive blessings, you now?</p> <p>To improve your understanding of Lamrim you know? Whatever it is, just to stay with it.</p> <p>I: And do you think that because the Lamrim retreat was just a week it was easier to do...rather than if it lasted... P6: I think so, because somehow it's almost like you know it's a week and OK I was, I knew my main trap, kind of, you know, pushing and wanting results.</p> <p>I don't whether that's wanting results but something like, yeah, doing things correctly or whatever, something like that.</p> <p>And then I knew that for a week, you know, it's not something big, you know? It's</p>	<p>that the normal response though is that it is easier to recognize things as special when they are different from one's own routine. P6 fantasizes that if she were on retreat for long her spontaneous special recognition would give rise to an ordinary recognition.</p> <p>For P6 the same applies to the Buddhist festival which she only perceives as being something special because such events are something out of the ordinary, which she doesn't do in her daily life's routine.</p> <p>P6 says these shifts in the way she perceives these situations are due to the lack of positive energy in her mind. The causes that she had created in the past to experience this as a result have produced the result but it has extinguished itself.</p> <p>For P6 it is of utmost importance to renew her intention to practice the spiritual path. P6 is aware that if she doesn't renew this intention then the intention will cease.</p> <p>For P6 it is very important to continuously engage int: 1)renewing her own intention of improving her self 2) training to gain experience 3) receiving powerful inspiration from more experienced practitioners, teachers and the holy beings.</p> <p>For P6 it s important to improve her understanding of Buddha's teachings on how to integrate the spiritual path into her daily life.</p> <p>*P6 believes that having a limit to her time on retreat allows her to manage her resources and effort in order to accomplish her goal. P6 had established her goal based on previous experiences and this was to not push herself and have too high expectation and focusing on results.</p> <p>P6 reflects that her wish to obtain results is related to her wish to do things correctly.</p> <p>P6 is better able to remain relaxed on retreat if she knows it is a short duration. P6 can</p>
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something small and you can kind of try to stay relaxed for a week and to...don't have, you know, really high expectations but something you know, life changing or happening or whatever. You just go and enjoy and...You know?

I: So, what is it exactly that you enjoy while you're on retreat?

P6: I think mostly (pause) just becoming more relaxed and more happy

because what makes us unhappy are our negative thoughts,

so meditating on Lamrim reduces our negative thoughts that make us unhappy and...

It's just more space for inner freedom and inner peace

and it really, in retreat; it really becomes very obvious that there's no problem outside the mind.

I mean, that was mostly when I was in long retreat that I really felt that I kind of, for the first time it clicked, that this was really true that there's no problem outside my mind because when you're on a retreat and you know OK, all the conditions are perfect, you know? You get your meals 3 times a day, you know, you sleep and everything is fine, whatever. There's no problem whatsoever, you know? Nothing! But still sometimes you're very, very unhappy. It's just obvious that it's not coming from the outside! It's just...you can't deny it! As much as you want...it's just obvious.

So, I had this, you know kind of negative experience in the long retreat and then in the short retreat I just had positive experiences, you know?

Realizing that "OK also, you know, happiness is coming from inside. OK, It's

establish SMART goals for herself within this time window. In this way P6 can better let go of expectations and a focus on desired outcomes. P6 focuses on engaging in the process to the best of her ability. As a result P6 enjoys and has a better performance.

*P6 enjoyment of being on retreat is related to experiencing feelings of relaxation and happiness.

P6 identifies the causes for her unhappiness being something internal, negative thoughts.

It is P6-s experience that by engaging in meditation on Lamrim (Buddha's teachings on how to integrate spiritual practice with daily life) her negative thoughts that cause her to be unhappy are reduced.

Through reducing negative thoughts P6 feels there is more internal availability for experiencing inner freedom and peace of mind.

On retreat it becomes very clear to P6 that her problems are not caused by external factors but rather by rather by internal factors within her own consciousness.

P6-s experience of long retreat was a turning point in which P6 became certain from personal experience that the cause of her suffering was internal rather than external. P6 had all the external conditions she identifies as making her happy. These include having her meals cooked and delivered for her, getting proper good sleep. Despite these P6 experienced intense states of unhappiness. P6 concluded thus her problems were not coming from external sources, they were her own unpleasant feeling. This was so clear for P6 that denying it became pointless.

P6's experiences on long and short retreat contrast. P6 had a negative experience on the one long retreat she attended and only positive ones in this short Lamrim retreat.

From her retreat experiences P6 concluded that happiness and happiness both come

<p>both, happiness and unhappiness.”</p>	<p>from within her consciousness and not from external sources, they are states of mind and depend mainly on the mind.</p>
<p>And it just depends what karma is ripening. In the short retreat it's just, you know positive experiences were ripening and...</p>	<p>P6 further reflects on the role karma plays on defining the emotional valence of her experiences. For P6 when she experienced happiness this was the result of positive actions she had performed in the past. For P6 when she experienced unhappiness this was the result of negative actions she had performed in the past.</p>
<p>I mean, being silent helps a lot to experience more happiness and more inner peace.</p>	<p>For P6 observing silence contributes to the improvement of her experience of happiness and inner peace.</p>
<p>But I think it's mainly that, mainly just an experience of inner joy, of happiness, of... You know? Relaxing, chilling out...</p>	<p>P6 resumes the contributing factors to her experience of enjoying herself on retreat: experience inner joy and happiness, relaxing and chilling out.</p>
<p>I: And how would the silence sort of help with that experience of happiness? P6: I think it's because you allow yourself...I mean one of the main things, for me, producing problems is communicating with others. (laughter)</p>	<p>*For P6 the way in which silence improves her experience of happiness is because many problems, negative thoughts and emotions, arise when communicating with others.</p>
<p>No but I think just being or living with others, so many delusions come up because you always think about “What does this person think about me?” ; “What do I have to do to please them?” ; “Why are they angry with me?” ; “Why do they hate me now?”; “What do I have to do now?”</p>	<p>P6’s view of the problem is that it lies in the negative thoughts and emotions that arise in her mind while interacting with others. P6 names some examples of such: 1) wondering what other might think of her, 2) the need to please others, 3) not knowing why others might be angry with her, 4) what she needs to do at specific moments of the interaction.</p>
<p>And it's you know, it's a constant analyzing going on in your mind when you...when you're concerned with others, you know? In a way of...because, I think because we don't love others sincerely at the moment.</p>	<p>P6 reflects that while interacting with others she is constantly analyzing and there is concern in her mind as to the effects of her in others indicating some level of anxiety being experienced. P6 reflects that the reason for such anxiety while interacting with others is that she has no real feeling of love towards them at the present time, no sincere wish for them to be happy at all times.</p>
<p>And we always think they exist inherently and we always have to find out who they are, you know? Whether they're really nice or</p>	<p>P6 further reflects on another aspect of the problem. This is the fact that she perceives others as existing inherently, in whatever way</p>

bad, whether, you know, they can help me fulfill my wishes or not.

And you're always trying to scan the situation, you're always trying to analyze it, to, you know, make the best out of it, to understand everything,

to make other people love you, whatever, you're always trying to manipulate all...

even if it's on a very subtle level and you think you are actually trying to love others and you think you're cherishing others but there's still so much thinking and analyzing going on.

And once you...once you know "I don't have to communicate with others" you know, "I don't even have to look at them! I don't even have to acknowledge that they are there." you know?
This whole thing just drops away, you just be totally in your own space and...

It's almost like you can stay with whatever experience you have made, without having to go out of it in order to...yeah...get into contact with other people.

It's almost like giving you the space to remain inside and, you know, and experience deeper or kind of understanding deeper what you have experienced and staying with it.

they might appear to be in different moments in time. This leads to confusion as others can appear as good or bad depending on the situation. Thus P6 develops the concern to figure out what they really are like, good or bad. P6 also reflects that this act of figuring out the goodness or badness in others bases itself on the criteria of their usefulness for her, a self centered selfish view.

P6 reflects on how she engages in much analyzing of situations involving interaction with others. For P6 this attitude is based on a self centered view and leads to experiencing much confusion.

P6 reflects on different levels of this kind of attitude of being self-centered and selfish. P6 is aware that it can be very subtle and she can be manipulative at times. P6 is also aware that her need to be loved by others is related to this attitude.

P6 is aware that this constant analyzing attitude can be present to some extent even when she is engaging in cherishing others.

When engaging in silence P6 engages in silence does not interact with others, she does not engage in talking, looking and them or even acknowledging their presence. For P6 there is a relief from the attitude of analyzing, it ceases and she experiences more space in her mind. P6 is aware that the relief experienced results from her own change of internal attitude and not from the lack of interaction with others itself.

P6 can hold her internal experiences for longer when observing silence. In contrast P6 experiences that when interacting with others she must let go of her internal experience of the meditation object.

For P6 observing silence allows her to remain focused on her consciousness. This leads to greater awareness and insight.

I mean, the main thing of meditation is mindfulness, isn't it? Is to keep in mind that which helps you to be peaceful and just staying where it is peaceful basically

and normally we don't stay there. We make a little experience but we go out again and we loose it and...

yeah, one thing that really helps is silence because if you don't have to communicate there's no reason why you have to leave that sphere of inner peace

and I mean, I think the more we get familiar with Lamrim thoughts, the more we can stay in that inner peace and then communicate.

But, you know, like on my level I find it almost impossible to kind of stay in that peace and at the same time communicate.

So for me being given like the freedom not to communicate, you know? Which is very rare, I mean when can you ever, you know?

Be in a place where it tolerated not to communicate? No, really and where people wouldn't be offended, would understand what it means, you know why you wouldn't communicate and it is no offense to not communicate?

I think that's just...being given that freedom allows you to stay within that sphere of inner

For P6 reflects the main aspect of meditation is mindfulness, being able to hold the meditation object and not be separated from it. The meditation object is something that necessarily improves her experience of inner peace.

P6 mentions the contrast between this desired state of being and her usual state of being. P6's usual state of being is that she holds the meditation object and becomes more familiar with it but loses it. P6 engages in repeating the process in order to increase her familiarity with the object and also her mindfulness ability.

For P6 one of the aspects of silence that improves her experience of inner peace is being able to hold the object for longer in her consciousness and increasing her familiarity with it.

For P6 the purpose of gaining familiarity with the objects of meditation of Lamrim is that she can become more skillful at doing this while interacting with others. This will lead her to improve her inner peace at all times even when interacting. For P6 the Buddha's teachings on how to integrate spiritual practice in one's life are ideal for this purpose.

P6 acknowledges the level she is in does not usually allow her to maintain the experience of inner peace while engaging in communication with others.

P6 perceives the opportunity to observe silence and not communicate as a freedom, a rare gift. P6 sees it as an opportunity to experience inner peace and train in it.

P6 sincerely appreciates that it is tolerated not to communicate at the retreat centre, she finds this to be uncommon. For P6 it is important that it is common agreement that observing silence serves a spiritual purpose and thus it does not offend others to do so.

For P6 being allowed to remain silent is a form of freedom and is conducive to

<p>peace and...</p> <p>I: So from what you are saying ideally you would be able to do the same as you do on retreat while you're interacting and communicating with others in your daily life? P6: Yeah, yeah. I mean that's what we are aiming at. That Lamrim thoughts become so natural that they just pervade our mind and everything we say and do comes out of that thought so there's no contradiction whatsoever.</p> <p>I mean that's where we are aiming at but I think, you know, Geshe-la and everybody else, they know it's training so in order to get there first of all we need to protect that experience, you know?</p> <p>It's like , you know...it's like, you know, a little plant, you now, you have to kind of protect it because if, you know, you just let everybody walk over it, you know, it's...it doesn't, doesn't grow, you know? It's just that's...it will be dead soon but if you put a fence around it and let it grow for a while then after a while when it is a strong tree then you can take the fence away and nobody, you know, can walk over it and trample it down, but that's what we are heading towards.</p> <p>It's just familiarizing our mind with inner peace so that whatever we do, whatever we say it's just coming out of that inner peace, it's just an expression of our love, of our compassion, of our wisdom and nothing else, yeah...</p> <p>And then I think, even then I think that everything you say even improves our wisdom and compassion, you know?</p> <p>It's almost like when we act out of a specific intention then that intention is reinforced but...</p> <p>and before that intention is strong, you know,</p>	<p>improving her experience of inner peace.</p> <p>*For P6 the aim of engaging in retreat is becoming very familiar with the teachings on integrating spiritual practice into her daily life so there is no contradiction between the two. P6 aims to interpret reality according to these at all times as to improve her experience of being. For P6 retreat is a training for improving her experience of daily life.</p> <p>P6 follows the advice from her spiritual guide and experienced practitioners, to perceive the spiritual path as a process of training. Thus P6 is aware she needs to cherish and protect whatever level of personal experience she achieves.</p> <p>P6's strategy involves protecting whatever level of skill she has achieved as to not let it decrease and cease. P6's strategy implies that if she trains gradually then in the future she will be able to expose herself to greater challenges and this will not affect her level of skill.</p> <p>For P6 her spiritual training on retreat is a process of increasing her familiarity with inner peace so that this experience can be carried into her experience of daily life, independent of the conditions she might be experiencing. P6's goal is to attain a stable experience of love, compassion and wisdom.</p> <p>For P6 having the intention to improve herself through Lamrim enables her to use her daily experience of communicating to improve her good qualities of love and wisdom.</p> <p>For P6 consciously acting under the influence of the intention of improving herself through Lamrim will reinforce the intention itself. The intention is reinforced through continuous activation on it.</p> <p>For P6 there the risk of losing the intention</p>
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<p>it might easily happen that we create or that we...how do you say?.. We develop an intention during meditation but then we immediately loose it after meditation</p>	<p>of improving herself through Lamrim. P6 reflects the risk comes from the intentions not being stable yet and that this can be trained in meditation and improved to a level of stability beyond return.</p>
<p>and then everything we do and say comes out of a different intention, like a negative intention or just mindlessness, whatever. And then it reinforces, you know, almost our distractions and meaningless thoughts and whatever.</p>	<p>P6 is aware that until she has a stable intention at all times to act under the influence of Lamrim her action will be prone to the influence of other kinds of thoughts that are not meaningful to her. This would be due to her lack of mindfulness of her intention. Acting under the influence of meaningless thoughts will reinforce distractions and pull P6 in a direction opposite to her spiritual training.</p>
<p>So at the beginning it just seems like retreat is a, is a good way of protecting our practice</p>	<p>For P6 retreat is a good way of improving he level of personal experience and her skills in a controlled environment.</p>
<p>and Geshe-la always gives us the advice to do both, you know?</p>	<p>P6 follows the advice from her spiritual guide to engage in spiritual training both on retreat and on her daily life.</p>
<p>To have a normal life, do, you now, our daily activities as usual and just do a daily Lamrim practice everyday</p>	<p>P6's spiritual Guide's advice on engaging in spiritual training on her daily life consists of performing the normal routine activities and engage in Lamrim mediation everyday.</p>
<p>and then once in a while, he says, go on retreat to improve your experience.</p>	<p>P6's spiritual Guide's advice on engaging in spiritual training on retreat consists of taking time out to go on retreat occasionally to improve her skill and personal experience.</p>
<p>And I think it's a wonderful method to...to make progress in a very natural way because we learn both. We learn how to integrate Lamrim into our daily lives and we learn how to deepen our experience in retreat. So, very very skillful method, yeah.</p>	<p>It is P6's opinion that this method is a valid, qualified, skillful one. With it P6 can make progress gradually learning both aspects of training on retreat to deepen her experience and in daily life applying that experience practically.</p>
<p>But for example, for me at the moment, I feel like my...the place where I'm at, the most important thing is to work for my centre because, you know,</p>	<p>P6 is now emphasizing engaging in spiritual training in daily life. P6 does this specifically by engaging in voluntary work in the local Buddhist Centre. P6 feels at the present time this is the most suitable practice for her, the one that will bring most benefit.</p>
<p>I had this experience in a long retreat and it was a very valuable experience, you know? Although, you know, it wasn't a pleasurable</p>	<p>P6 values the experiences she has had on retreat, acknowledges she has learned from it even if it was not pleasurable at all times.</p>

experience but it was very valuable but still I think at the moment for me the most important thing is to be out of retreat, working,

and you know, just accumulating merit, purifying negativity which, you know, it's just words but the meaning is, you know, coping in your daily life by applying Lamrim, you know?

And working for your centre you have so many opportunities, you know? People yelling at you (laughter)

I: true.

P6: People you know, whatever, hating you, people not talking to you or people telling you what to do and not to do and whatever, you know?

Just so many opportunities to practice Lamrim and I think, you know,

when we go through all this trying to improve every day, every day, every day, trying to not give up cherishing others, trying to not run away from our problems, trying to not run away from our centre, you know? Trying to deepen our reliance on our teacher, trying to deepen our pure view, our wisdom, whatever...

then I think we create such good conditions to go on retreat someday, you know?

And then it will all fall together, I'm sure, you know? If you go through all this training I think retreat will become so easy, so easy. Because so many opportunities in daily life to purify, to just gain a deep experience of Lamrim and then you sit down and everything is easy, I'm really definite.

Yet P6 thinks at the present time she should be out of retreat and emphasizing engaging in spiritual training in her daily life by working.

P6's spiritual training on daily life as the focus of accumulating positive causes and purifying negativity. In her own words this means coping with daily life by applying the Lamrim teachings to it.

For P6 engaging in voluntary work for her local Buddhist Centre provides her with many opportunities to practice. This is so because it implies interaction with others and the challenges associated to this interaction. Examples of such are the conflicts that arise amongst people as they yell at each other or boss each other around.

P6 sees these conflicts as good opportunities to apply Buddha's teachings to her life and cope through doing this.

For P6 experiencing challenges in her daily life and overcoming them by applying Buddha's teachings to them is accomplished through strategies such as:
Cherishing others even when they are not being pleasant to her;
Face problems rather than avoid them or run away from them;
Deepening her trust in her Dharma teacher;
Focusing on the good qualities of every situation;
Remembering things do not exist inherently independent from her own perception of them;
Others...

For P6 doing this in her daily life ensures she is creating good conditions to then train in different levels of spiritual practice that cannot be accomplished in daily life.

P6 is certain that by training continuously and gradually making use of the many opportunities of daily life then when she goes on retreat she will experience good results naturally without having to push herself too much. P6's view is that by focusing on the process rather on the outcome results will come.

But I know it's a long way, you know? It's just working through all this stuff we have in our mind but that's OK, I'm definite, you know? That we have the best methods and the best conditions, yeah.

I: Sounds perfect!

P6: Yeah! Well you don't realize while you are in it. While you are in it, you know, you just think everything is horrible and I just want to give up and it doesn't make any sense

but sometimes especially here you have some wisdom and you recognize "no, it makes sense" and it's normal to have horrible feelings and, you know, to just doubt everything,

you realize "OK, that's part of my, of my way of learning" and at the same time you reconnect

and you see everybody is the same, everybody has the same problems, everybody has the same experiences and you, know, it's just learning and learning, learning, learning...and improving slowly, yeah.

I: That's great. I think we are sort of running out of time. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish?

P6: Not really, I think, yeah.

I: Thank you so much.

P6>My pleasure.

P6 is aware this training process is a long one that may take a long time to complete. P6 is confident in the method she is following and in the conditions she experiences.

*P6 says that although she is confident in the method and believes whatever conditions she has now are the right ones for her to improve herself she is unable to maintain this view at all times. P6 reflects that there are times when she is engaging in the process and experiencing difficulties when she feels like quitting and experiences negative thoughts and emotions and things don't seem to make sense to her.

P6 copes with discouragement overcomes it by applying wisdom, remembering it is expected to experience negative emotions and doubt things and this does not imply a complete loss of meaning of her spiritual path.

P6 sees difficult moments as part of her learning process and this allows her to reconnect to the meaning of her spiritual practice and the purpose of it.

P6 contemplates through observation how others also experience the same problems and difficult times as she does.

P6 concludes this to be part of the learning process itself, not just hers but this is also the experience of others and focuses on improving gradually.

ANEXO G

Glossário Termos Budistas
relevantes para o contexto deste Estudo

retirado de <http://kadampa.org/pt/reference/glossrio-de-termos-budistas/>

em 21 nov 2008

Ações não-virtuosas Caminhos que levam aos reinos* inferiores. Existem incontáveis ações não-virtuosas, mas a maioria delas está incluída nas dez seguintes: matar, roubar, má conduta sexual, mentir, discurso divisor, discurso ofensivo, tagarelice, cobiça, maldade e adotar visões errôneas.

Agarramento-ao-verdadeiro Mente conceitual que apreende a existência verdadeira.

Agregado Em geral, todas as coisas funcionais são agregados, pois são uma agregação de suas próprias partes. Uma pessoa do reino do desejo ou da forma possui cinco agregados: forma, sensação, discriminação, fatores de composição e consciência. Seres do reino da sem-forma não têm o agregado forma, só os outros quatro. O agregado forma de uma pessoa é seu corpo. Os outros quatro são aspectos de sua mente. Os agregados de um ser do samsara denominam-se agregados contaminados.

Agregados contaminados Qualquer dos agregados de um ser que está no samsara: forma, sensação, discriminação, fatores de composição e consciência.

Amor Mente que deseja que os outros sejam felizes. Existem três tipos de amor: afetivo, apreciativo e grande amor.

Análise Fator mental que examina um objeto para obter uma compreensão de sua natureza sutil.

Anticonscienciosidade Fator mental deludido que deseja envolver-se irrestritamente em ações não-virtuosas..

Antivigilância Fator mental deludido que, por ser incapaz de fazer a distinção entre falhas e

não-falhas, leva-nos a gerar falhas.

Aparência comum Qualquer aparência ocasionada por uma mente impura. De acordo com os ensinamentos do mantra secreto, aparência comum é a principal causa do samsara..

Aparência dual A aparência de um objeto e da sua existência inerente à mente.

Aparência e concepção comuns Aparência comum é qualquer aparência que surja à mente pelo fato de ela ser impura. Concepção comum é qualquer mente que conceba as coisas como comuns. De acordo com os ensinamentos do mantra secreto, as aparências comuns são obstruções à onisciência, e as concepções comuns são obstruções à libertação..

Apego Fator mental deludido que observa um objecto contaminado, considera-o como causa de felicidade e deseja possuí-lo..

Aspiração Fator mental que focaliza um objeto de desejo e se interessa por ele.

Atenção Fator mental cuja função é pôr em foco um atributo específico de um objeto.

Auto-agarramento Mente conceitual que considera todos os fenômenos como inerentemente existentes. O auto-agarramento dá origem a todas as demais delusões, como raiva e apego, e é a raiz de todos os sofrimentos e insatisfações.

Auto-apreço Atitude mental que considera nosso próprio eu como precioso e importante. É tido pelos Bodissatvas como o principal objeto a ser abandonado.

Autoconhecedor Consciência que experiencia a si mesma.

Avareza Fator mental deludido que, motivado por apego desejoso, agarra-se firmemente às coisas e não deseja separar-se delas.

Base de imputação Todos os fenômenos são imputados às suas partes; portanto, qualquer das partes individuais ou o conjunto das partes de um fenômeno é a sua base de imputação. Um fenômeno é imputado pela mente quando sua base de imputação aparece à mente que imputa..

Bênção (jin gyi lab pa, em tibetano) Transformação da mente de um estado negativo para um estado positivo, de um estado infeliz para um estado feliz ou de um estado de fraqueza para um estado de força por meio da inspiração dos seres sagrados, como nosso Guia Espiritual, os Budas e os Bodissatvas.

Bodichita Termo sânscrito para “mente de iluminação”. Bodhi significa iluminação e chitta, mente. Há dois tipos de bodichita – convencional e última. De modo geral, o termo refere-se

à bodichita convencional, uma mente primária motivada por grande compaixão que busca espontaneamente a iluminação para beneficiar todos os seres vivos. A bodichita convencional pode ser de dois tipos: aspirativa e engajada. A bodichita aspirativa é uma bodichita que é um mero desejo de alcançar a iluminação para beneficiar todos os seres vivos. A bodichita engajada é uma bodichita mantida pelos votos bodissatva. A bodichita última é uma sabedoria, motivada pela bodichita convencional, que realiza diretamente a vacuidade, a natureza última dos fenômenos.

Bodichita aspirativa Mente que aspira alcançar a iluminação para beneficiar todos os seres vivos, mas que ainda não se engajou nas práticas do treino de um Bodissatva. Equivale à situação de alguém que pretende viajar, mas que ainda não se pôs a caminho.

Bodichita engajada Depois de se tomar os votos bodissatva, a bodichita aspirativa se transforma na bodichita engajada, uma mente que está de fato engajada nas práticas que levam à iluminação.

Bodichita tântrica Desejo de atingir a iluminação como uma deidade tântrica, a fim de livrar os seres sencientes do samsara o mais rapidamente possível.

Bodissatva Alguém que gerou a bodichita espontânea, mas ainda não se tornou um Buda. A partir do momento em que um praticante gera a bodichita não-artificial, ou espontânea, ele se torna um Bodissatva e ingressa no primeiro caminho mahayana, o caminho da acumulação. Bodissatva comum é aquele que ainda não realizou a vacuidade diretamente e Bodissatva Superior é quem já o fez.

Buda Em geral, Buda significa O Desperto, alguém que acordou do sono da ignorância e vê as coisas como elas realmente são. Um Buda é um ser que abandonou por completo todas as delusões e suas marcas. Todo ser vivo tem o potencial para se tornar um Buda.

Buda Shakyamuni O quarto de mil Budas que vão aparecer neste mundo durante o Éon Afortunado. Os primeiros foram: Krakuchchanda, Kanakamuni e Kashyapa. O quinto será Maitreya..

Budadarma Os ensinamentos de Buda e as realizações que alcançamos ao colocá-los em prática. Sinônimo de Dharma.

Budeidade Sinônimo de completa iluminação.

Budismo kadampa Escola budista mahayana fundada pelo grande mestre indiano Atisha (982-1054).

Budista Qualquer pessoa que sinceramente busque refúgio nas Três Jóias: Buda, Dharma e

Sanga.

Caminho espiritual Excelsa percepção combinada com renúncia espontânea, ou não-fabricada. Caminho espiritual, solo espiritual, veículo espiritual e excelsa sabedoria são sinônimos. Ver [solo](#).

Caminho mahayana Uma realização clara no continuum mental de um Bodissatva ou Buda. Os caminhos mahayana são cinco: acumulação, preparação, visão, meditação e não-mais-aprender. Os quatro primeiros estão necessariamente no continuum de um Bodissatva e o último, no continuum de um Buda.

Caminho mundano Ações contaminadas que conduzem ao renascimento samsárico. Há dois tipos: as dez ações não-virtuosas que conduzem aos reinos inferiores e as dez ações virtuosas e as concentrações contaminadas que conduzem aos reinos superiores.

Caminho profundo Inclui todas as práticas de sabedoria que conduzem a uma realização direta da vacuidade e, por fim, a aquisição do corpo-verdade de um Buda.

Caminho vasto Inclui todas as práticas do método, desde o cultivo inicial da compaixão até a aquisição final do corpo-forma de um Buda.

Caminhos supramundanos Qualquer caminho que conduza à libertação ou à iluminação. Por exemplo: as realizações de renúncia, bodichita e visão correta da vacuidade. Estritamente falando, só os seres superiores possuem caminhos supramundanos.

Campo de Mérito Em geral, as Três Jóias. Assim como as sementes das plantas dependem de um campo para crescer, também as sementes virtuosas interiores, produzidas por ações virtuosas, dependem da Jóia Buda, da Jóia Darma e da Jóia Sanga.

Carma Termo sânscrito que se refere a ações. Pela força da intenção, realizamos ações com nosso corpo, fala e mente, e todas essas ações produzem efeitos. O efeito das ações virtuosas é felicidade, o das ações negativas é sofrimento.

Carma coletivo Carma que criamos quando agimos junto com os outros. Aqueles que criam carma em grupo, também experienciam seus efeitos em grupo.

Coisa funcional Todo fenômeno que é produzido e se desintegra num instante. Sinônimo de fenômeno impermanente. Ver [impermanência](#).

Compaixão Mente virtuosa que deseja que os outros se libertem do sofrimento. Ver [grande compaixão](#).

Compromissos Promessas e votos assumidos quando nos engajamos em certas práticas

espirituais.

Concentração Fator mental que faz sua mente primária permanecer em seu objeto unifocadamente. Em geral, os termos “estabilização mental” e “concentração” são intercambiáveis. O termo concentração é mais usado para se referir à natureza da concentração, que é unifocalização, e o termo estabilização mental é usado para se referir à função da concentração, que é estabilidade.

Concepção comum Qualquer mente que conceba as coisas como comuns.

Confissão Purificação de carma negativo por meio dos quatro poderes oponentes: o poder da confiança, do arrependimento, da força oponente e da promessa.

Consciência As seis consciências, ou mentes primárias, são: consciência visual, consciência auditiva, consciência olfativa, consciência gustativa, consciência tátil e consciência mental.

Conscienciosidade Fator mental que, na dependência do esforço, aprecia o que é virtuoso e protege a mente contra delusão e não-virtude.

Consideração pelos outros Fator mental cuja função é evitar ações impróprias por motivos que dizem respeito aos outros.

Contato Fator mental cuja função é perceber seu objeto como agradável, desagradável ou neutro.

Contentamento Ficar satisfeito com suas condições exteriores e interiores, motivado por uma intenção virtuosa.

Contínua-lembrança Fator mental cuja função é não esquecer o objeto que foi realizado pela mente primária.

Corpo-emanção O corpo-forma de um Buda que pode ser percebido pelos seres comuns. Existem dois tipos – o supremo e o comum. O supremo pode ser visto somente por aqueles que têm carma puro, e o comum pode ser visto por todos. Em geral, os Budas se manifestam sob diferentes formas e, embora algumas dessas emanações tenham o aspecto mundano, em essência, todas as emanações de Buda são seres plenamente iluminadas.

Corpos de Buda Um Buda possui quatro corpos: o corpo-verdade sabedoria, o corpo-natureza, o corpo-fruição e os corpos-emanção. O primeiro é a mente onisciente de Buda; o segundo é a vacuidade ou natureza última dessa mente; o terceiro é seu corpo-forma sutil; e o quarto é constituído pelos corpos-forma densos, que podem ser vistos pelos seres comuns e que cada Buda manifesta em número ilimitado. O corpo-verdade sabedoria e o

corpo-natureza estão incluídos no corpo-verdade, e o corpo-fruição e o corpo-emanção estão incluídos no corpo-forma.

Dar Decisão mental virtuosa de praticar generosidade ou uma ação corporal ou verbal de praticar generosidade motivada por um estado mental virtuoso. Existem três tipos: dar coisas materiais, dar o Darma e dar destemor.

Darma Os ensinamentos de Buda e as realizações interiores alcançadas na dependência de praticá-los. Darma significa proteção. Colocando os ensinamentos de Buda em prática, protegemo-nos contra sofrimentos e problemas.

Dedicatória Fator mental naturalmente virtuoso. É uma intenção virtuosa que serve tanto para impedir que a virtude acumulada se degenere como para fazê-la aumentar.

Deidade (Yidam, em sânscrito) Ver [iluminado tântrico](#)

Delusão Fator mental que surge da atenção imprópria e serve para tornar nossa mente agitada e descontrolada. Existem três delusões principais: ignorância, apego desejoso e raiva. Delas nascem todas as demais: inveja, orgulho, dúvida deludida etc.

Dez ações não-virtuosas Matar, roubar, má conduta sexual, mentir, discurso divisor, discurso ofensivo, tagarelice, cobiça, maldade e esposar visões errôneas.

Disciplina moral Determinação mental virtuosa de abandonar qualquer falha ou uma ação física ou verbal motivada por essa determinação.

Discriminação Fator mental cuja função é apreender os sinais particulares de um objeto.

Distração Fator mental deluído que se desvia para qualquer objeto de delusão.

Dorje Shugdän Um Protetor do Darma que é uma emanção do Buda da Sabedoria Manjushri.

Emanção Forma animada ou inanimada que é manifestada pelos Budas ou Bodissatvas elevados para beneficiar os outros.

Estabilização mental Em geral, os termos estabilização mental e concentração são intercambiáveis. O termo concentração é mais usado para se referir à natureza da concentração, sua unifocalização, ao passo que o termo estabilização mental é usado para se referir à função da concentração, sua estabilidade.

Etapas do caminho Lamrim em tibetano. Uma maneira especial de organizar todos os ensinamentos de Buda, que facilita sua compreensão e prática. Revela todas as etapas do caminho à iluminação.

Existência inerente Modo de existência imaginado, segundo o qual os fenômenos são tidos como se existissem do seu próprio lado, independente de outros fenômenos. Na realidade, todos os fenômenos são vazios de existência inerente, porque dependem das suas partes.

Existência verdadeira Uma existência que seja, de algum modo, independente de imputação conceitual.

Fé Fator mental virtuoso que serve principalmente para eliminar a antífé. Fé é uma mente naturalmente virtuosa, cuja função principal é se opor à percepção de falhas no seu objeto observado. Existem três tipos de fé: fé de acreditar, fé de admirar e fé de almejar.

Felicidade Existem dois tipos de felicidade: mundana e supramundana. A primeira é a felicidade limitada que pode ser encontrada no samsara, como a felicidade de humanos e deuses. A segunda é a felicidade pura da libertação e da iluminação.

Felicidade mundana Felicidade limitada que pode ser encontrada no samsara, como a felicidade de humanos e deuses.

Felicidade supramundana A felicidade pura da libertação e da iluminação.

Fenômeno contaminado Qualquer fenômeno que faça surgir delusões ou cause seu aumento. Exemplos: ambientes, seres e prazeres do samsara.

Fenômeno dependente-relacionado Qualquer fenômeno que existe na dependência de outros fenômenos. Todos os fenômenos são dependente-relacionados, porque dependem de suas partes. Dependente-relacionado (ten drel, em tibetano) tem o mesmo significado que originação dependente (ten jung, em tibetano), mas, às vezes, o segundo termo quer dizer surgir na dependência de causas e condições.

Fenômeno permanente É aquele que não depende de causas e que não se desintegra momento a momento. Fenômenos são permanentes ou impermanentes.

Geshe Título concedido nos mosteiros kadampa para eruditos budistas com certas qualificações. Forma abreviada das palavras ge wai she nyen, em tibetano, que significam literalmente “amigo virtuoso”.

Grande compaixão Uma mente que deseja proteger todos os seres sencientes do sofrimento. Geralmente, existem três tipos: compaixão que observa os seres sencientes, compaixão que observa os fenômenos e compaixão que observa o inobservável. O primeiro tipo é a compaixão que surge ao observarmos o sofrimento dos seres vivos. O segundo tipo é a grande compaixão induzida e acompanhada por uma realização da impermanência, e a

terceira é a grande compaixão induzida e acompanhada por uma realização da vacuidade. A primeira é uma grande compaixão que não é qualificada por nenhuma destas realizações.

Guia Espiritual Guru, em sânscrito e Lama, em tibetano. Professor que nos guia ao longo do caminho espiritual.

Guru raiz Principal Guia Espiritual, que nos concedeu iniciações, instruções e transmissões orais da nossa prática central.

Hinayana Termo sânscrito para “pequeno veículo”. A meta deste caminho é atingir tão-somente a libertação pessoal do sofrimento por meio do completo abandono das delusões.

Ignorância Fator mental confuso sobre a natureza última dos fenômenos.

Iluminação O termo refere-se, em geral, à plena iluminação de um Buda. Existem três tipos de iluminação: a pequena iluminação de um Ouvinte, a iluminação mediana de um Conquistador Solitário e a grande iluminação de um Buda, ou budeidade. Uma iluminação é uma libertação e uma verdadeira cessação.

Impermanência Fenômenos podem ser permanentes ou impermanentes. Impermanente significa momento a momento, transitório; assim, um fenômeno impermanente é produzido e se desintegra dentro de um instante. Fenômeno impermanente, coisa funcional e produto são sinônimos. Existem dois tipos de impermanência: densa e sutil. A densa é a que se percebe por meio da percepção sensorial comum – por exemplo, o envelhecimento e a morte de um ser senciente. Impermanência sutil é a desintegração de uma coisa funcional que ocorre momento a momento.

Imputação, mera De acordo com a escola de filosofia budista superior, a madhyamika-prasangika, todos os fenômenos são meramente imputados pela concepção na dependência das suas bases de imputação. Portanto, os fenômenos são meras imputações e não existem do seu próprio lado.

Intenção Fator mental cuja função é mover sua mente primária para o objeto. Serve para envolver a mente com objetos virtuosos, não-virtuosos ou neutros. Todas as ações corporais e verbais são iniciadas pelo fator mental intenção.

Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419) Emação de Manjushri, o Buda da Sabedoria, cujo aparecimento no Tibete do século XIV, como um monge e detentor da linhagem da visão e dos feitos puros, foi profetizado por Buda. Difundiu o puro budadarma por todo o Tibete, mostrando como combinar as práticas de sutra e tantra e como praticar o puro Darma em tempos degenerados. Posteriormente sua tradição ficou conhecida como Gelug ou Ganden.

Kadampa Termo tibetano, no qual ka significa palavra e se refere a todos os ensinamentos de Buda, dam refere-se às instruções especiais de Atisha, conhecidas como etapas do caminho à iluminação, e pa refere-se a um seguidor do budismo kadampa que incorpora todos os ensinamentos de Buda que conhece à sua prática do Lamrim.

Lamrim Termo tibetano que significa literalmente “etapas do caminho”. Trata-se de uma apresentação especial de todos os ensinamentos de Buda, que é fácil de ser compreendida e praticada. Revela todas as etapas do caminho à iluminação.

Libertação (Nirvana, em sânscrito) Liberdade completa do samsara e de suas causas, as delusões.

Linhagem Linha de instruções, passada de Guia Espiritual a discípulo, em que cada guru da corrente obteve uma experiência pessoal das instruções antes de transmiti-las aos outros.

Linhagem búdica Mente raiz de um ser senciente e sua natureza última. Linhagem búdica, natureza búdica e semente búdica são sinônimos. Todos os seres sencientes possuem uma linhagem búdica; portanto, todos têm o potencial para alcançar a budeidade.

Mahamudra Termo sânscrito que significa literalmente “grande selo”. Segundo o sutra, refere-se à visão profunda da vacuidade. Uma vez que a vacuidade é a natureza de todos os fenômenos, ela é chamada de um “selo”, e, visto que uma realização direta da vacuidade nos capacita a conquistar o grande propósito – a libertação completa dos sofrimentos do samsara -, ela também é chamada de “grande”. De acordo com o tantra, o grande selo é a união de grande êxtase espontâneo e vacuidade.

Mahayana Termo sânscrito para grande veículo, o caminho espiritual à grande iluminação. A meta mahayana é alcançar a budeidade para o benefício de todos os seres vivos, abandonando por completo as delusões e suas marcas.

Mantra Termo sânscrito que significa literalmente “proteção da mente”. O mantra protege a mente contra as aparências e concepções comuns. Existem quatro tipos de mantra: mantras que são mentes, mantras que são ventos interiores, mantras que são sons e mantras que são formas. Em geral, existem três tipos de recitação de mantra: verbal, mental e vajra.

Meditação É uma mente que se concentra num objeto virtuoso. É também uma ação mental que é causa principal de paz mental. Existem dois tipos de meditação: analítica e posicionada. Quando usamos nossa imaginação, contínua-lembrança e raciocínio para encontrar nosso objeto de meditação, estamos praticando a meditação analítica. Quando

encontramos o objeto e o retemos unifocadamente, estamos praticando a meditação posicionada. Existem diferentes tipos de objeto. Alguns, como impermanência ou vacuidade, são objetos apreendidos pela mente. Outros, como amor, compaixão e renúncia, são estados mentais. Fazemos a meditação analítica até que o objeto específico que estamos procurando apareça com clareza à nossa mente ou até que um determinado estado mental seja gerado. Esse objeto ou estado mental será nosso objeto da meditação posicionada.

Meditação analítica Processo mental de investigar um objeto virtuoso – analisando sua natureza, função, características e outros aspectos.

Meditação posicionada Concentração unifocalizada num objeto virtuoso.

Mente Aquilo que é clareza e que conhece. A mente é clareza porque sempre carece de forma e tem o poder de perceber objetos. A mente conhece porque sua função é conhecer ou perceber os objetos.

Mente conceitual Pensamento que apreende seu objeto por meio de uma imagem genérica, ou imagem mental.

Mente muito sutil Existem diferentes níveis de mente: densa, sutil e muito sutil. As mentes sutis se manifestam quando os ventos interiores se reúnem e dissolvem dentro do canal central.

Mente não-conceitual Conhecedor para o qual seu objeto aparece claramente, sem se misturar com uma imagem genérica.

Mente primária Conhecedor que apreende principalmente a mera entidade de um objeto. Sinônimo de consciência. Existem seis mentes primárias: consciência visual, consciência auditiva, consciência olfativa, consciência gustativa, consciência tátil e consciência mental. Cada instante da mente contém em si uma mente primária e vários fatores mentais. Uma mente primária e seus fatores mentais acompanhantes são uma mesma entidade, mas exercem diferentes funções.

Mente raiz Mente muito sutil localizada no centro do chakra do coração. É conhecida como mente raiz porque todas as outras mentes surgem dela, e nela se dissolvem de volta.

Mera aparência Todos os fenômenos são meras aparências porque são imputados pela mente em decorrência de uma base de imputação adequada aparecer a essa mente. A palavra “mera” exclui a qualquer possibilidade de existência inerente.

Mérito Boa sorte criada por ações virtuosas. É o poder potencial para aumentar nossas boas qualidades e produzir felicidade.

Não-virtude Fenômeno que funciona como causa principal de sofrimento. Não-virtude pode se referir a mentes, ações ou marcas não-virtuosas ou à não-virtude última do samsara.

Natureza búdica Mente raiz de um ser senciente e sua natureza última. Natureza, semente e linhagem de Buda são sinônimos. Todos os seres sencientes possuem a natureza búdica e, portanto, o potencial para alcançarem a budeidade.

Natureza convencional Ver [natureza última](#).

Natureza convencional e última Todos os fenômenos possuem duas naturezas: uma natureza convencional e uma última. Por exemplo, a natureza convencional de uma mesa é a própria mesa, seu formato, sua cor, sua altura etc. A ausência de existência inerente da mesa é a sua natureza última. A natureza convencional de um fenômeno é uma verdade convencional e sua natureza última, uma verdade última.

Nova Tradição Kadampa (NTK) A associação internacional dos centros de estudo e meditação, que segue a pura tradição do budismo mahayana, derivada dos meditadores e eruditos budistas Atisha e Je Tsongkhapa, e introduzida no ocidente pelo mestre budista venerável Geshe Kelsang Gyatso.

Objeto observado Qualquer objeto que esteja sendo focado pela mente.

Obstruções à libertação que impedem a conquista da libertação. Todas as delusões, como ignorância, apego e raiva, juntamente com suas sementes, são obstruções à libertação. Também chamadas de “obstruções-delusões”.

Obstruções à onisciência Marcas das delusões que impedem uma realização simultânea e direta de todos fenômenos. Só os Budas superaram essas obstruções. Também conhecidas como “obstruções ao conhecimento”.

Oito interesses mundanos Os objetos dos oito interesses mundanos são felicidade e sofrimento, riqueza e pobreza, elogio e crítica, boa e má reputação. São denominados mundanos, porque as pessoas mundanas estão constantemente preocupadas com eles, desejando uns e tentando evitar outros.

Os oito versos do treino da mente Escrito pelo Bodissatva Langri Tangpa no século XI, esse texto revela a essência do caminho à iluminação do budismo mahayana.

Paciência Uma determinação virtuosa de suportar males, sofrimentos ou o Dharma profundo.

Percepção Há seis percepções, cinco sensoriais e uma mental, e todas as mentes estão incluídas nelas. Existem cinco tipos de percepção sensorial: visual, auditiva, olfativa,

gustativa e tátil, e dois tipos de percepção mental: conceitual e não-conceitual.

Percepção errônea Um conhecedor que está equivocado a respeito do seu objeto conectado.

Percepção mental Aquela que se desenvolve na dependência da sua condição dominante incomum, um poder mental.

Percepção sensorial Aquela que se desenvolve na dependência da sua condição dominante incomum, uma faculdade sensorial que possui forma. **Pessoa** Um eu imputado na dependência de qualquer um dos cinco agregados.

Postura vajra Postura perfeita de meditação, na qual as pernas ficam cruzadas na postura vajra completa, o pé esquerdo sobre a coxa direita e o pé direito sobre a coxa esquerda, ambos com as solas para cima. A mão direita repousa sobre a mão esquerda, as palmas voltadas para o alto, e os dois polegares levantados tocam-se na altura do umbigo. As costas permanecem eretas, e os ombros, emparelhados. A boca fica suavemente fechada, a cabeça, um pouco inclinada para frente, e os olhos, nem muito abertos nem fechados demais.

Práticas preparatórias Práticas que nos preparam para uma meditação bem sucedida, tais como purificar a mente, acumular mérito e receber bênçãos.

Preciosa vida humana Uma vida que tem oito liberdades e dez dotes especiais, o que a torna a oportunidade ideal para treinar a mente em todas as etapas do caminho à iluminação.

Prostração Ato de respeito feito com o corpo, a fala ou a mente.

Protetores do Dharma Manifestações de Budas ou Bodissatvas cuja função principal é eliminar obstáculos e propiciar as boas condições aos puros praticantes de Dharma. Também denominado Darmapala.

Purificação Em geral, qualquer prática que conduza à aquisição de um corpo, fala e mente puros. Mais especificamente, uma prática para purificar carma negativo por meio dos quatro poderes oponentes.

Quatro nobres verdades Verdadeiros sofrimentos, verdadeiras origens, verdadeiras cessações e verdadeiros caminhos. Elas são denominadas “nobres” porque são objetos supremos de meditação. Meditando sobre elas podemos realizar diretamente a verdade última e nos tornar um Ser Superior, ou nobre.

Quatro poderes oponentes Elementos essenciais para o sucesso de uma prática de

purificação: o poder da confiança, o poder do arrependimento, o poder da força oponente e o poder da promessa.

Raiva Fator mental deludido que observa um objeto contaminado, exagera suas más qualidades, considera-o indesejável e quer prejudicá-lo.

Realização Experiência estável e não-enganosa de um objeto virtuoso, que nos protege diretamente contra o sofrimento.

Refúgio Proteção efetiva. Buscar refúgio em Buda, Dharma e Sangha significa ter fé nessas Três Jóias e confiar nelas para nos proteger contra todos os medos e sofrimentos.

Renúncia Desejo de se libertar do samsara.

Retiro aproximador Retiro durante o qual tentamos nos aproximar de uma determinada deidade.

Retiro Período de tempo durante o qual estabelecemos várias restrições às nossas ações de corpo, fala e mente a fim de poder nos concentrar de modo mais profundo numa determinada prática espiritual.

Sabedoria Uma mente virtuosa e inteligente, graças à qual a mente primária realiza por completo seu objeto. Uma sabedoria é um caminho espiritual, cuja função é livrar nossa mente das delusões e de suas marcas. Exemplo de sabedoria é a visão correta da vacuidade.

Sadana Ritual que é um método para alcançar realizações espirituais. Pode estar associada ao sutra ou ao tantra.

Samsara Pode ser compreendido de duas maneiras: como o renascimento ininterrupto sem liberdade ou controle ou como os agregados de um ser que está submetido a esse tipo de renascimento. O samsara caracteriza-se por sofrimento e insatisfação. Existem seis reinos samsáricos, aqui listados em ordem ascendente, de acordo com o carma que faz nascer neles: reinos dos seres-inferno, espíritos famintos, animais, humanos, semideuses e deuses. Os três primeiros são reinos inferiores ou migrações infelizes; os outros três são reinos superiores ou migrações felizes. Do ponto de vista do carma que causa o renascimento nele, o reino dos deuses é considerado o mais elevado. Todavia, o reino humano é o mais afortunado, porque é o estado que oferece as melhores condições para a libertação e a iluminação.

Sangha Segundo a tradição vinaya, qualquer comunidade de quatro ou mais monges ou monjas plenamente ordenados. Em geral, pessoas ordenadas ou leigas que tomaram os

votos bodissatva ou tântricos também podem ser consideradas Sanga.

Self Ver [Pessoa](#).

Sensação Fator mental cuja função é experienciar objetos agradáveis, desagradáveis ou neutros.

Ser comum Alguém que não realizou a vacuidade diretamente.

Ser de compromisso Um Buda visualizado ou o próprio praticante visualizado como um Buda. Assim chamado porque os budistas têm o compromisso de visualizar Buda ou lembrar dele. Quem recebeu uma iniciação do tantra ioga superior também tem o compromisso de se autogerar como uma deidade.

Ser de concentração Símbolo do corpo-verdade de Buda visualizado como uma letra-semente no coração do ser de compromisso ou do ser de sabedoria. Recebe esse nome porque é gerado por meio de concentração.

Ser de sabedoria Um Buda de fato, especialmente aquele que é convidado a se unir com um ser de compromisso visualizado.

Ser sagrado Um ser digno de devoção.

Ser senciente Ver [ser vivo](#).

Ser Superior (Arya, em sânscrito) Aquele que possui uma realização direta da vacuidade. Existem seres superiores hinayana ou mahayana.

Ser vivo (sem chän, em tibetano) Sinônimo de ser senciente. Qualquer ser cuja mente esteja contaminada pelas delusões ou suas marcas. Os termos ser vivo e ser senciente são usados para estabelecer uma distinção entre os seres, cujas mentes estão contaminadas por uma das duas obstruções, e os Budas, cujas mentes estão totalmente livres dessas obstruções.

Sufrimento de mudança Para os seres do samsara, qualquer experiência de felicidade ou prazer que surge dos prazeres samsáricos é um sofrimento de mudança, porque essas experiências são contaminadas e possuem a natureza do sofrimento.

Sutra Ensinaamentos de Buda que podem ser praticados por qualquer pessoa, sem que seja necessário receber uma iniciação. Abrange os ensinamentos dados nas três giradas da Roda do Darma.

Tantra Sinônimo de mantra secreto. Os ensinamentos tântricos diferem dos ensinamentos do sutra por revelarem métodos para treinar a mente com o objetivo de trazer o resultado

futuro “a budeidade” para o caminho atual. Os praticantes tântricos superaram as aparências e concepções comuns visualizando seu corpo, ambiente, prazeres e atividades como os de um Buda. O tantra é o caminho supremo à iluminação. As práticas tântricas devem ser feitas reservadamente e apenas por aqueles que receberam uma iniciação tântrica. Sinônimo de mantra secreto.

Tempos degenerados Período no qual as atividades espirituais se degeneram.

Tempos sem início De acordo com a visão de mundo budista, não há um começo para a mente e, por isso, não há um começo para o tempo. Logo, todos os seres sencientes já tiveram incontáveis renascimentos anteriores.

Terra pura Ambiente puro em que não existem os verdadeiros sofrimentos. Há muitas terras puras. Exemplos: Tushita, de Buda Maitreya; Sukhavati, de Buda Amitabha; Terra Dakini, ou Keajra, de Buda Vajrayogini e Buda Heruka.

Tradição Kadampa A pura tradição do budismo fundada por Atisha. Seus seguidores, até a época de Je Tsongkhapa, ficaram conhecidos como antigos kadampas; depois, passaram a ser chamados de novos kadampas.

Treino da mente Lojong, em tibetano. Uma linhagem especial de instruções provenientes de Buda Shakyamuni e transmitidas, por meio de Manjushri e Shantideva, a Atisha e aos geshes kadampas. Enfatiza a geração da bodichita por meio das práticas de equalizar e trocar eu por outros, associadas com o tomar e dar.

Três Jóias Os três objetos de refúgio: Buda, Dharma e Sangha. São denominados jóias por serem raros e preciosos.

Três principais aspectos do caminho As realizações de renúncia, bodichita e da sabedoria que realiza a vacuidade.

Três reinos São os três níveis no samsara: o reino do desejo, o reino da forma e o reino da sem-forma. Os seres do reino do desejo têm fortes delusões, os do reino da forma, delusões mais sutis, e os do reino da sem-forma, delusões muito sutis. Ver [reino do desejo](#), [reino da forma](#)- forma e [reino da sem forma](#).

Três tempos Passado, presente e futuro.

Três treinos superiores Os treinos em disciplina moral, concentração e sabedoria feitos com a motivação de renúncia ou bodichita.

Vacuidade Ausência de existência inerente, a natureza última dos fenômenos.

Vajrayogini Deidade feminina do tantra ioga superior, a corporificação do êxtase e da vacuidade indivisíveis. Mesma natureza que Heruka.

Verdade convencional Qualquer fenômeno que não seja a vacuidade. As verdades convencionais são verdades para a mente de um ser do samsara, mas, na realidade, elas são falsas.

Verdade última Natureza última de todos os fenômenos. Sinônimo de vacuidade.

Verdadeira cessação Natureza última da mente que foi libertada de todas as obstruções por meio de um verdadeiro caminho.

Verdadeira origem Ação ou delusão que é a causa principal de um verdadeiro sofrimento.

Verdadeiro caminho Caminho espiritual sustentado pela sabedoria que realiza diretamente a vacuidade.

Verdadeiro sofrimento Objeto contaminado, produzido por delusões e carma.

Vigilância Fator mental que é um tipo de sabedoria que examina nossas atividades de corpo, fala e mente e detecta o desenvolvimento de falhas.

Virtude Fenômeno que funciona como causa principal de felicidade. Virtude pode se referir a mentes, ações ou marcas virtuosas ou a virtude última do nirvana.

Visão errônea Percepção errônea intelectualmente formada que nega a existência de um objeto cujo conhecimento é necessário para atingirmos a libertação ou a iluminação. Um exemplo de visão errônea é negar a existência de seres iluminados, carma ou renascimento.

Votos Promessas de abster-se de certas ações. Os três conjuntos de votos são: os votos pratimoksha de libertação individual, os votos bodissatva e os votos do mantra secreto.

Yidam Ver [deidade](#).

ANEXO H**Structure of the Experience A (P1, P3, P5 & P6)**

For these participants the role and presence of the retreat master and the resident community are very important. The participants feel loved by the retreat master, feel him to be safe and to have the skill and knowledge to guide them in improving the quality of their experience of being, recognising also similar qualities in the resident community members. This confidence together with the external retreat conditions enables them to be guided into monitoring themselves their own patterns of cognition, emotion and behaviour becoming gradually more aware of them. Some pain and discomfort are experienced in the process since difficulties and negative emotions are addressed without distractions or escapes. Their level of self awareness increases and also they experience deep insights as to their own mental processes. They train in identifying and discriminating between functional and dysfunctional cognitions in order to change the emotions they experience as a consequence and also the subsequent behaviour, all from dysfunctional and unpleasant to functional and more positive. They also train in changing their core beliefs and the meanings attributed to both internal and external stimuli. The main tool for training is meditation in which they integrate the new meanings they want to attribute to their experience of being and of being in the world with practical examples of their previous personal experience. Being a part of a group is recognised as being significant to the quality of the experience. They find indicators of improvement in their training such as better intellectual understanding, higher levels of concentration and less intensity of dysfunctional cognitions and associated negative emotions which are carried through in their post retreat daily experience. While on retreat they focus on the process and letting go of expectations of results, experiencing positive feelings and increased levels of inner peace.

Structure of the Experience B (P2)

For P2, who is a male lay Buddhist practitioner with some retreat experience, the role and presence of the retreat master are of central importance. P2 feels loved by the retreat master, feels him to be safe and to have the skill and knowledge to guide him in improving the quality of his experience of being. This confidence together with the external retreat conditions enables P2 to be guided into monitoring himself his own patterns of thought, emotion and behaviour becoming gradually more aware of them. Some pain and discomfort are experienced in the process since difficulties and negative emotions are addressed without distractions or escapes. P2's level of self awareness increases and also he experiences deep insights as to his own mental processes. P2 trains in identifying and discriminating between functional and dysfunctional cognitions in order to change the emotions he experiences as a consequence and also his own behaviour. P3 also trains in changing her core beliefs and the meanings attributed to both internal and external stimuli. The main tool for training is meditation in which P2 integrates the new meanings he wants to attribute to his experience of being and of being in the world with practical examples of his previous personal experience. Being a part of a group is recognised as being significant to the quality of the experience. P2 experiences moments of perceived loss of control of his mental processes with discomfort and anxiety. The confidence in the retreat master acts as a safety net in these episodes and the negative emotions addressed by changing the cognition about the nature of the self through meditation. P2 finds indicators of improvement in his training such as higher levels of concentration and less intensity of dysfunctional cognitions and associated emotions and these are noticed both during and post retreat.

Structure of the Experience C (P4)

For P4, who is a male ordained Buddhist practitioner with much solitary retreat experience, his role in bringing about changes in the quality of his own experience is of central importance. Also important is the role of the retreat master whom P4 feels to be safe and to have the skill and knowledge to guide him in improving the quality of his experience of being. This confidence together with the retreat external conditions enables P4 to monitor himself his own patterns of thought, emotion and behaviour becoming gradually more aware of them. Some pain and discomfort are experienced in the process since difficulties and negative emotions are addressed without distractions or escapes. P4's level of self awareness increases and also he experiences deep insights as to his own mental processes. P4 trains in identifying and discriminating between functional and dysfunctional cognitions in order to change the emotions he experiences as a consequence and also his own behaviour. P4 also trains in changing his core beliefs and the meanings attributed to both internal and external stimuli. The main tool for training is meditation in which P4 integrates the new meanings he wants to attribute to his experience of being and of being in the world with practical examples of his previous personal experience. Being a part of a group is recognised as being significant to the quality of the experience. P4 experiences moments of perceived loss of control of his mental processes with discomfort and anxiety. The confidence in the retreat master acts as a safety net in these episodes and the negative emotions are addressed by changing his cognitions through meditation thus leading P4 to build up confidence in himself and his ability. P4 finds indicators of improvement in his training such as higher levels of concentration and awareness; and also less intensity of dysfunctional cognitions and associated emotions.