



**Commentary on
Je Tsong-kha-pa's
Lam Rim Chen Mo
By Venerable Jih-Chang**

English Commentary Book 3, ver 1.0

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For use by students of the monastery only

Purpose:

This book contains the translation of Master Jih-Chang's commentary of the *Lamrim chapter 4 "Relying on the Teacher"*. It is for use by BW Monastery students only. It serves to facilitate students' understanding of the Lamrim as explained by Master Jih-Chang.

Student Feedback:

The translation of Master's commentary in this book is still a draft and will be improved. All students are welcome to provide your feedback to improve the translation. Kindly submit your feedback via the feedback form that is available in the BW Monastery web page, where this book can be downloaded from.

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[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 06:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P185, L3]

IV. How to lead students with the actual instructions **The actual instructions are explained in two parts:**

This is from the perspective of accurate concordance with the essence of Buddha Dharma and this essence is applied to guide students. Therefore, it must have a specific order, which is divided into two parts:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 07:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P185, L7]

- 1. How to rely on the teacher (Chapters 4-6)**
- 2. How the students train their mind after having relied on the teacher (Chapter 7 and on)**

What is the primary foundation in learning Buddha Dharma? It is to rely on excellent teachers. So [we] have mentioned in the beginning: listening to Buddha Dharma has two parts. The first one is the virtuous teacher and next is the self. So, one hundred plus one hundred equals one hundred. The first one hundred is from the excellent teacher, which is in the first part of the Lamrim outline. And then, after reliance, how you should train is covered in the latter part.

Relying on the teacher is further divided into two parts.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 07:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P185, L9]

There are two parts to the explanation of how to rely on the teacher:

- 1. A somewhat elaborate explanation for developing certain knowledge (Chapter 4)**
- 2. A brief indication of how to sustain the meditation (Chapters 5-6)**

This will actually enable us to enter [the teaching], so we will first briefly review the formation of certain recognition. Upon having this recognition, next, the text guides us briefly on the most important principles for practice. Both of them are very important. In fact, to me, each one is indispensable. Moreover, each part actually lists all of our existing infirmities; however much you are able to improve will be however much concordance you have with the teaching.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 08:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P186, L2]

- 1. A somewhat elaborate explanation for developing certain knowledge**

**Atisha's Digest (Hrdaya-niksepa-nama) states:
One who abides in the lineage of the Mahayana
Has relied on an excellent teacher.**

This is from the digest of Atisha, I am not certain if it is a digest or a commentary, I am not sure. What does "abides in the lineage of Mahayana" mean? Normally, ordinary beings are divided into three groups: one is certain-nature or certain-aggregate, the second is uncertain-nature and the last one is certain-demonic-nature. Certain-nature means this kind of person already has virtuous roots and is

determined to advance on the path of Buddha Dharma. The certain-demonic-nature lacks virtuous roots and certainly won't enter [the study] of Buddha Dharma. The other type of person has uncertain-nature; he is not certain – when seeing other ordinary beings, [he] would follow, if the guidance were from an excellent teacher, he would enter the study of Buddha Dharma. So this, “those who abide in the lineage of Mahayana” refers to beings of certain-nature. Usually, we consider this type of person as the practitioners at causal stage – they may be endowed with the tendency to practice, the tendency to be on the path, or the sage's tendency and so forth – we base this on various guidelines to distinguish. Often we refer to this as: *faith, dwelling, Bodhisattva activity, dedication, stages and so on, these are referencing the beings abiding in the Mahayana lineage. We are the beings stated here. In other words, those with virtuous roots and the aspiration to study Buddha Dharma, these people have decided to rely on excellent teachers. This [attitude] is most crucial. This is quoted from [Atisha's Digest]. I believe this is a commentary.

*[*Please refer to the table in 2B prologue translation. On Array of Stalks Sutra there are 52 levels on the Bodhisattva path: ten levels of faith; ten levels of dwelling; ten levels Bodhisattva activities; ten levels of dedication; and ten levels of stages. There is also the tenth level Bodhisattva and Buddha. There are a total of 52 levels for ordinary beings to advance to Buddhahood.]*

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 10:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P187, L1]

Also Dol-Wa's arrangement of Bo-do-wa's Method of Explaining says:

Next is the great teacher's explanation, what does it say?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 10:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P187, L3]

Of all the personal instructions, “Do not give up the excellent teacher” is the prime instruction.

Bo-do-wa is one of the three main disciples of Venerable Drom-don-ba. In other words, they are the upholders of the entire lineage of Venerable Atisha's teachings. And Venerable Atisha is the crown jewel of the Buddhist community at his time. He was the only one capable of completely assembling [Buddha's teachings from] all the different schools in India. And Venerable Drom-don-ba received the Dharma Works [of Venerable Atisha] in their entirety. Venerable Drom-don-ba had three main disciples; one of them was Bo-do-wa. Bo-do-wa, Pu-chung-wa, and Jen-nga-wa were often known as Drom-don-ba's three sons. In fact, the Tibetan transmission of Buddha Dharma relied on these three. So Bo-do-wa said: Of all the personal instructions – if we were to compile the entire essence of Buddha's teachings – in other words, what is the essence of the essence? It is just one statement: never be apart from the excellent teacher.

[14A, 11:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P187, L12]

For us, we usually hold the *Array of Stalks Sutra* in esteem. The *Array of Stalks Sutra* also says: in order for you to achieve omniscience, study Buddha Dharma. There is only one requirement: rely on excellent teachers and never forsake them. You can refer to the chapter of *Entering the Dharma Realm* of the *Array of Stalks Sutra* ... I believe it

starts from chapter sixty-seven. This concept is emphasized in many places throughout [this sutra], all the way to the end. Therefore, without any exception among the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or masters of the lineage, all practitioners are alike. Speaking of this reminds me that we are frequently picking on this or that and look down at others. This shows that the most we can be is just a person of uncertain-nature. Or, if we are careless, we are very likely to be among the certain-demonic-nature group. For those beings of certain-nature that rose to the level of sages, without any exceptions, they all wholeheartedly look up to and rely on excellent teachers. These are our role models. They are examples for us to follow. Next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 12:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P188, L6]

Thus, the excellent teacher is the source of all temporary happiness and certain goodness, beginning with the production of a single good quality and the reduction of a single fault in a student's mind and eventually encompassing all the knowledge beyond that.

In order for us students to receive physical and mental benefits, regardless of how small this benefit is, at the very least – from the aspect of good quality – there is accumulation of merits. And, with respect to reducing faults: it is to eradicate obstacles and remove flaws – even at a bare minimum; it all relies on excellent teachers! And what does this mean? They are the source of all temporary happiness and certain goodness. I can sincerely sense it right now! I recall when I was newly ordained and I lived at the Taipei Tong-jing Bodhi Abode. My room was next to Venerable Ren's, and there was a storage room in between. Often, we wouldn't say a word for days and this was

definitely true. Even during the daily time for conversation, it was required for everyone to come out. You were not allowed to come out at other times, but at that time you had to come out!

[14A, 14:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P188, L14]

Venerable Ren's lifestyle could be considered as monotonous, yet now I like it very much. After listening to his talk, everyone returned [to their own rooms]. Although we were locked inside our rooms, it was dead silent, for there were only a few people to begin with! However, you could sense that: well, he is just next-door. Just like that, you would constantly sense it. Back then, unknowingly, there were two things in your mind. When you were uneasy, he was whom you could depend on. When you were distracted, he would look at you with wide eyes. So, you would naturally collect yourself, just like that. Not to mention the times when you are in his presence! Oftentimes, there were many minor details in his everyday activities, well; it now leaves an unforgettable memory in [my] mind. That was when I had just begun [practice as a monk]. Later, when advancing from each level, I always maintained this kind of attitude, which is very much the truth. Thus, the excellent teacher is too important, absolutely important!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 14:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P189, L8]

Therefore, the way you initially rely on the teacher is important,

So in this section, “rely on the teacher,” pay attention, this is very interesting! This word “rely” has great meaning! It is

not whether there are teachers around, rather, it is that you lack the understanding of how to rely on a teacher – whether you can rely on him or not is a teaching to be mastered. This concept and reasoning is extremely important, extremely important! Until now, we may always feel that, “Alas, all ravens are black!” That description applies to ordinary beings! Although it is true, nevertheless, in the darkness there are excellent teachers shining bright like the sun, yet you don’t have the vision to spot them. It will depend on your ability to rely on him. Thus, the concept of “relying on the teacher” is very crucial.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 15:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P190, L1]

**for the Scriptural Collection of the Bodhisattvas ((Bodhisattva-pitaka) states:
In short, attaining and bringing to completion all the bodhisattva deeds,**

This is in general; when Bodhisattva deeds are perfected, the effect is Buddhahood.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 15:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P190, L3]

and likewise, attaining and bringing to completion the perfections, levels, forbearances, concentrations, superknowledges, retentions of teaching heard, dedications, aspirational prayers, confidence to speak, and all the qualities of a Buddha are contingent upon the guru. The guru is the root from which they arise.

All Mahayana teachings including the six perfections, levels, forbearances, and concentrations; we will not go into detail. All of these depend on reliance on the guru. “Guru” is your excellent teacher - your virtuous teacher - this is of great importance.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 16.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P190, L7]

The guru is the source and creator from which they are produced. The guru increases them. They depend upon the guru. The guru is their cause.

[All Mahayana good qualities] arise and increase from here, through constant reliance on the Guru. The primary cause lies right here.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 16.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P190, L10]

Also, Bo-do-wa said:

Next is the quote from Bo-do-wa, the great teacher of the lineage,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 16.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P190, L12]

For attaining freedom there is nothing more important than the guru.

For practitioners to achieve liberation, there is nothing more important [than relying on the guru]. Next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 16.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P191, L1]

It is sufficient to learn the activities of this life by watching others, but you will not learn them well without an instructor. Likewise, without a guru, how can we succeed in traveling to a place where we have never been, having just been reborn from a miserable realm?

Just by looking around and comparing the worldly beings to the renunciates, the [worldly] have more convenient conditions: by mimic other person; you will be able to do the same, too. But, sorry! Without proper instruction, you will most likely not be good at it – you will not do it correctly without guidance! Even such simple worldly tasks you won't be able to master by mimicking others, not to mention something that is this difficult and profound. Moreover, even the worldly things are what you are accustomed to; you will not be able to master it by only mimicking others. Now, for this renounced path, you are totally unfamiliar with. From beginningless time, we have been in the miserable realms – constantly circling in it – completely unknown to the renounced practice. If you claim to have the ability to complete it on your own, then this Buddha and Dharma are way too easy. Thus, let's not take Buddhism [as the example]. Just by observing worldly phenomena you will not be good at it without guidance!

[14A, 18:01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P191, L10]

So now, what does our own situation look like? [We were] constantly in the lower realms and were just reborn from a miserable realm. In other words, our tendencies from the miserable realm are weighty and are not aligned with virtue. The destination is totally unfamiliar! How can it be achieved without teachers? How can it happen if [we] forsake teachers? This is what we need to repeatedly contemplate and analyze sincerely in our minds. Once your mind has generated this capacity, you will naturally look for virtuous teacher seriously. On the contrary, you will not consider looking for one while constantly submerged in the current state. What does this current state reveal? It is an afflictive attitude. Ah, this affliction does not necessarily mean feeling miserable, sitting there thinking, “this is pretty good and life is very pleasant!” This is the state of being unable to be motivated, just like that – this is our laziness. The preceding section has provided us with a general outline, now we may say well, since relying on virtuous teacher is so important, then next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P69; 14A, 19:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P192, L7]

a. The defining characteristics of the teacher to be relied upon

What are the qualified characteristics of the excellent teacher?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P69; 14A, 19:25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P192, L9]

b. The defining characteristics of the student who relies upon the teacher

And what are the qualifications of students who intend to rely on them?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P69; 14A, 19:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P192, L11]

c. How the student relies upon the teacher

Once the qualifications are met, then, at the time of relying on this teacher, what is the proper approach and principles?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P69; 14A, 19:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P193, L1]

d. The benefits of relying on the teacher

e. The faults of not relying on the teacher

What are the laudable benefits of reliance? And what are the great faults of not having reliance?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P69; 14A, 19:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P193, L3]

f. A summary of the meaning of the previous five parts

Moreover, to briefly sum this up, this simply provides an overview of the previous five parts. This is the sixth part, “a

summary of the meaning of the previous five parts.” These are the aspects of reliance on the excellent teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P70; 14A, 20:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P193, L6]

Generally, in the scriptures and commentaries many defining characteristics of the teacher are taught from the viewpoint of the individual vehicles. However, the following is a description of a teacher who instructs you in the stages on the paths of the three persons of different capacities and guides you to the Mahayana, which is the path to Buddhahood.

Throughout all of the laudable teachings: Buddha’s sutras and Bodhisattvas’ commentaries and so forth – in other words, the overall Buddha Dharma – various approaches were taught. Regarding these different approaches, what is “the viewpoint of the individual vehicles”? It is that, there are people with different nature and dispositions: there are human and deity, sravaka and pratyekabuddha, so on and so forth. Thus, to guide beings of different nature, of course there are different methods. Now, what is this virtuous teacher referring to? This teacher is able to gradually instruct all beings, including humans and deities, sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas, and eventually guide them to Buddhahood on the Mahayana path – this kind of excellent teacher.

[14A, 21:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P193, L13]

This virtuous teacher has a special good quality: his ultimate goal is to guide you to Buddhahood. Since he never forsakes humans or deities, therefore he is able to guide all

beings. Some [teachers] can only guide humans and deities, but not beyond sravakas or pratyekabuddhas. Now this teacher is completely and extremely capable. Overall, he can reach the highest level with the most skillful means, with most effective guidance for you to advance. And his ultimate goal is this – guiding us to Buddhahood. So, from this perspective, what does this mean? It represents the essence of the *Lotus Sutra*, which says, “Buddha applied various approaches to guide various types of beings, eventually leading them to the Buddha realm.” Well, this is the essence of [*the Lotus Sutra*]. Next is the quote from:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 22:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P194, L7]

With respect to this, Maitreya says in his *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras (Mahayana-sutralamkara)*

This quote is from the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 22:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P194, L9]

**Rely on a Mahayana teacher who is disciplined, serene, thoroughly pacified;
Has good qualities surpassing those of the students;
is energetic; has a wealth of scriptural knowledge;
Possesses loving concern; has thorough knowledge of reality and skill in instructing disciples; and has abandoned dispiritedness.**

This excellent teacher is endowed with the following ten qualifications: disciplined, serene, thoroughly pacified, good qualities surpassing those of the students, energetic, has a wealth of scriptural knowledge, has thorough knowledge of

reality, skill in instructing disciples, possessing loving concern, and has abandoned dispiritedness. For a virtuous teacher with such qualifications, you must rely on him.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 22:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P194, L12]

Thus Maitreya says that a student must rely on a teacher who has these ten qualities.

So a student should rely on such a virtuous teacher, there are ten qualities for such virtuous teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 22:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P195, L1]

It is said that those who have not disciplined themselves have no basis for disciplining others.

I will try to explain it again: if personal discipline is not achieved, trying to discipline others is impossible, and it will never work. This can also be the guideline for selecting a virtuous teacher to rely on; it also tells us what the qualities of virtuous teachers are. Our selection of reliance is like this – we should have the same attitude to teach others. Without taming the self, it is of no use [to help self or others].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 23:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P195, L5]

Therefore, gurus who intend to discipline others' minds must first have disciplined their own.

You have to tame your mind first; that is why we seriously need to study Buddha Dharma – it is to discipline the self.

The other name for discipline is “sila” or “precepts.” This is why, after our ordination, we must rely on virtuous teachers immediately – to learn discipline or precepts. Well, this is clear! This is not to say that I am ordained, so I rely on a teacher to show me how to put on the robe and how to play the Dharma instruments. Of course these are required, for you still need to build the image! However, if it is only about this, then it is wrong. There is a worldly term, “sheer impressive appearance,” which is something lacking substance, just like [an embroidered pillow case stuffed with materials of inferior quality]. If you attained the essence within, the appearance is absolutely important – this is how the internal and external complement each other. Thus, it does not mean that the appearance is not needed; it is to hold on [to the essence]. On the contrary, if you don’t grasp the essence within and just work on the cosmetic appearance, then you will deviate further and further. And even, in the end, it could turn into an obstacle for you.

[14A, 24:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P195, L14]

I will pick a random example. For instance, our chanting and so on, in order to attain the essential content, the tone is very important. Because this sound corresponds with the Dharma Realm, there is a tone that will naturally enable your mood to be pacified and there is another tone that will agitate and confuse you. So when you obtain this essence and apply it spontaneously, all sorts of proficient approaches are required – there cannot be any negligence – so the chanting is very important. If you don’t have the essence and stand here trying to learn, you will not be able to grasp its essential meaning. Then, if you apply your own understanding, it is very likely that you will be further away, because you don’t know what the essence is! As you view it

with a worldly perspective, you are not aware that you have a worldly perspective and can possibly make it even worse! Thus, the more you chant, the further away you go! This is how everything is, and this is the point we should understand.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 25:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P196, L8]

How should they have been disciplined?

So, in this situation, how does one become disciplined? In other words, how did the excellent teacher work on self-discipline? It reveals below,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14A, 25:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P196, L11]

It is not helpful for them to have done just any practice, and then have the result designated as a good quality of knowledge.

Well, this is not saying that the practitioner has no practice at all! “To have done just any practice” – the part of “just any practice” is easy to understand – he more or less has practiced some. What is “any”? It means any practice to his liking. A true Mahayana teaching especially requires a thorough understanding of the entirety of the complete path, and then advance step-by-step, instead of practicing anything you come across. To randomly apply any teaching is fine for the individual practitioner. If I come across chanting Buddha’s name, I chant Buddha’s name. If I encounter practicing Zen meditation, I practice Zen meditation. And even if you randomly recite one chapter of sutra you will more or less have this cause to enter [the

teaching] – this attitude is considered as “any.” However, in this situation, by adopting this approach of scratching the surface, can personal discipline be achieved? It is not possible, impossible. In this situation, you can’t even tame yourself, how can you help others?

[14A, 26:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P197, L5]

So we can see many people applying meditation now. Well, so and so can achieve meditative serenity in a sitting posture. He may feel very good in the sitting meditation, however, once out of the meditation he engages in worldly matters - the attachment, anger, and ignorance are still there. Thus, meditation is common to the worldly beings. If you apply it in the renounced path, that meditation is absolutely important. Upon noticing, ah, this person achieved meditative serenity. You want to study Buddha Dharma from him – don’t be so sure. He could possibly be a great practitioner or a non-Buddhist! This is very explicit and clear, so we must grasp the essence of Buddha Dharma.

[14A, 27:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P197, L10]

Another point is that you may say: “Wow, this person’s apparent sign of upholding the precepts is pretty good.” As Buddha taught us, if this practitioner is incapable of attaining the true essence within, the appearance may not necessarily be good. Well, this person may chant Buddha’s name very well, however, he may be a great chanter, after the chanting session, his attachment, anger and ignorance still remains – these are all considered as “to have done just any practice.” From the perspective of the encompassing Mahayana teaching, this is not sufficient! It is definitely great

to guide us to plant virtuous seeds – for we have to distinguish it very clearly. Hence, always be assured that this treatise teaches us this direct, broad, grand, accurate and complete path. This high standard is not for us to measure others with, yet it is to distinguish the logic very clearly and apply it to ourselves by saying, “I must take this path.” This is what is considered truly important; I just wanted to mention it here.

[14A, 28:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P198, L2]

So, with the preceding statement of “it is not helpful for them to have done just any practice, and then have the result designated as a good quality of knowledge.” Why does it say, “Designated as a good quality of knowledge”? Because of the random application – he may have some accomplishment, but this accomplishment is not accountable within the entire essence of the Buddha Dharma! Thus, it is referred to as “designated as a good quality of knowledge.” In the example of building a house that we mentioned before, it is the same. Well, you go out to build a house, maybe you see that place piled with steel bars and cement, and you presume this place is for building a house – not necessarily! On the contrary, while the architect sitting in the office is planning to ensure every aspect is covered, this may be more proficient than the former case. Even nothing can be seen from the appearance, but the latter case is progressing in the proper direction for advancement. We have to recognize this sequential order very clearly.

[14B, 00:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P199, L2]

So it says here, to “have the result designated as a good quality of knowledge,” which will be very important for our future progress of earnest application, very important. [You] must have a good grasp of this. Otherwise, when people say, “This person is great,” then you will follow him. I have heard of this from all kinds of people. Just the other day, someone told me, “This certain Lu person is very remarkable! He has so much worldly contribution, whereas, for those of you who talk about the greatness of Buddha Dharma for quite a long time, what is your contribution?” I seriously thought it over and it reminded me of this [“result designated as a good quality of knowledge”]. Thus, the same applies to those of us entering the Buddha Dharma. Wow, look at this Dharma Master, ah, he is able to sit there and meditate for several days, chanting Buddha’s name up to a certain state – this [aspiration] is good. We have to clearly distinguish the differences [between true attainment of meditative state verses designated as having the attainment].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71;14B, 00:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P199, L7]

They need a way to discipline the mind that accords with the general teaching of the Conqueror.

This states that a genuine, virtuous teacher would not confuse the order of the general teaching in its entirety. He is able to grasp this principle. That is why, in the case I used just now, well, the architect sits in his office without any sign of building a house, no sign at all! However, he sits in the

office designing an ingenious blueprint perfectly. This is guaranteed to be without any flaws! This is the difference.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 01:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P200, L3]

The three precious trainings are definitely such a way. Therefore, Maitreya indicated them with these three terms: “disciplined,” “serene,” and “thoroughly pacified.”

The general outline must be these three precious trainings – ethical discipline, meditative serenity, and wisdom insight – “disciplined, serene, and thoroughly pacified.” By expanding these [three precious trainings], we further include the six perfections and so on. Here, it is expanded into ten qualities. Now, let’s take a look at these ten:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 01:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P200, L7]

With respect to what Maitreya said, “disciplined” refers to the training in ethical discipline.

Disciplined refers to the precepts.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 01:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P200, L9]

The *Sutra on the Vows of Individual Liberation* (Pratimoksa-sutra) states:

This is quoted from the *Vinaya Sutra*

**These vows of individual liberation
Are the bridle set with sharp nails.
With constant effort they are fit
For the difficult-to-rein horse of the straying mind.**

Our minds are like horses, so they are referred to as “restless and whimsical” – the monkey or horse mind. Why say that it is like a horse? [Most] horses are like the monkey, constantly trotting without stopping, acting quickly and abruptly; this is the sign of our mental state, just like that. By the time the horse is tired from running, it will fall asleep. This is the way they are. Even you constantly try to control it, it is impossible to be controlled. So what should be done? For those who ride horses, we need a bridle, which needs to fit well. Also, sharp spurs on the boots are the way to tame the horse that is difficult to rein. Now what is this rein? It is the monastic vows. Thus, the vows have such great benefits!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 02:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P201, L6]

Also the *Exegesis of the Discipline* (Vinaya-vibhanga) states:

This is the bridle for undisciplined disciples.

Also, the *Exegesis of the Discipline* tells us – well, it is the *Agama Sutra*. This undisciplined disciple actually applies to both Mahayana and Hinayana. The foundation of both vehicles is to tame the undisciplined using the precepts. Thus, the precepts are the bridle for undisciplined living beings. When we ride the horse, we pull on the bit in its mouth to control the horse.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 03:27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P201, L11]

As is implied above, the senses pursue improper objects and, like wild horses,

The trainer uses an effective bridle to tame the undisciplined horse – the unyielding one!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 03:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P201, L13]

lead you to engage in unsuitable actions. Just as the trainer tames a wild horse with a good bridle,

Our five sensory faculties are just like a wild horse – constantly spinning around external non-virtuous objects. When the faculties – the monkey or horse mind – follow an inappropriate object that is the time to tame and discipline it. This is the true spirit of the precepts. It is not the external appearance. Instead, it is the training of the mind. If we just focus on the external image of “wow, I am here creating the image”, this is the external appearance! Therefore, we must recognize when our minds are ruled by the five sensory faculties spinning around the external objects, we need to bring it back, and the first applicable antidote is the precepts.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P71; 14B, 04:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P202, L6]

so too teachers learn ethical discipline to control their senses and to turn toward suitable actions with great effort. Hence, teachers have “disciplined” their minds, which are like wild horses.

This is our purpose of applying the precepts – what is the purpose? It is to discipline the horse-like mind. Diligently apply various methods to tame it, and, once it is tamed, try to direct the mind to a proper direction. Therefore, with respect to what should not be engaged in, stop from doing it. We have to do what should be engaged in, so this is what the “guideline for proper behavior” is referring to. This is the true purpose of the precepts. The nature of the mind is restless; however, it is not for you to eliminate it. It is for you to transform it. These are the precepts. Now let’s take a recess.

[14B, 05:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P202, L12]

So the first thing is to apply the precepts to discipline. With regard to the content, for the time being we are unable to understand it, so there is no need to go into detail. Later, due to the sequence of the teachings, the precepts will surely be discussed in great detail. This is the required study for us. Here, all we have to know is the systematic order. On the one hand, it is [for us] to know the systematic order. On the other hand, we need to recognize the true essence of the precepts, this is very important. The first step for us is to ensure the understanding of the essence of the precepts specified right here [to discipline our minds].

[14B, 06:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P203, L3]

Therefore, we have to recognize one thing here: to talk about upholding the precepts before recognizing the correct view, the timing is not there yet. Thus, prior to obtaining the correct view, we should generate “faith” – to trust and rely on the virtuous teacher and listen to him. Then, what does

this prerequisite depend on? It is the recognition that I am sick – in the midst of the great illness of ignorance. By then, you recognize your own illness of ignorance, and have the awareness that all [your] mental activities are wrong. That is the time when you willingly rely on others. Otherwise, you will think that you are always right and view others negatively; this situation is inevitable.

[14B, 06:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P203, L8]

In the Sutra, there was a case; actually, it is a story. There was a place, every year during a certain time, toxic rain would fall – rain with toxins in the air. For instance, during our rainy season here, the rain falls constantly. And in the North [of China], in the spring, there are always sandstorms during a certain season. The toxic rain is due to the toxins in the air, which may not be strong enough to kill us, but it would cause us to go into a stupor. After this type of rain, the substance contaminated the drinking water, which made those who drank it act in a wild manner. A few days later, the [contaminated] water receded, and the water resumed its original purity. Thus, everyone would gradually return to his or her regular states. Local people were aware of this annual event – a period of strange days – but no one knew exactly what the cause was. Well, some came to their senses sooner and found it strange. Eventually, everyone woke up without knowing the cause!

[14B, 07:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P204, L2]

There was an extraordinarily smart man, after having observed these events for a long time; he believed that it had to do with the rain. So after analyzing this for several

years, he believed: “that could be it.” So the following rainy season came, and he refrained from drinking the rainwater. Instead, he drank the water that he had set aside ahead of time. Consequently, everyone else drank the rainwater and, sure enough, they became drunk and acted deranged – life was turned completely upside down, and right or wrong was reversed. Even then, this smart man remained very clear. Because of his clarity, he tried to convince others, saying, “So and so! You are wrong! It is erroneous!” Yet others not only would not listen to him, but they even thought, “How can I be wrong? You are mixed up!” [The smart man] sensed that he was unable to engage with this person, so he moved on to the next person. As a result, to persuade one was fine, the worst case was having an argument. He tried to convince two or more, but the effect was not only they did not see the situation clearly, rather, they turned around and claimed, “This guy is crazy, out of his mind!” In the end, those that he had tried to convince, all agreed that [this smart man] was out of his mind, and the so-called sane men locked him up after beating him, this was what happened. It was not until after the rainy season that this man was nowhere to be found. Later, he was found in the jail, “Well, you are a decent person, how did you end up in the jail?” This smart man felt like it was all a terrible joke.

[14B, 09:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P204, L14]

What is the moral of this story? Isn't it true that we are all in the midst of derangement? We think that those with correct perceptions are wrong and incorrect – this is so true. Look around us now; this is a very common situation, not to mention the Buddha Dharma. For instance, for us as Chinese people, when two friends who rarely see each other may meet in the restaurant for a meal, it would

certainly turn into “I treat you or you will treat me.” Whereas westerners wouldn’t be like this! Well! When friends meet and say: “Let’s go eat!” After the meal, “How much?” It is three hundred [Taiwan] dollars! Both of them would split the cost and each person would pay half of it. For us, it would be: “How can it be like this!” You may disagree with the westerner’s style. On the contrary, the westerner also could not understand you – they may feel it is normal to share the cost after a meal and why are you people fighting over the bill, what for? All worldly things are without any exception [different perception from different culture background]; I believe we should be able to understand this!

[14B, 10:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P205, L7]

Why is there a need to bring these up? In the very beginning of our learning; it is not easy to grasp the correct views immediately! Since you don’t have a handle on the correct views, you feel unable to learn. If that is the case, you will miss the opportunity to study. Thus, this is why [we] have to first recognize that “I am ill” and become willing to trust and rely [on the teacher or doctor]. This is the requirement for us to enter into the domain of the teachings. So it was repeated again and again in the preceding discussion. This principle is not just within Buddha Dharma, it is the same for all worldly matters. [If you wait for] when you have perfect clarity to apply it, things do not work that way. First, it will be impossible for us to be here today, impossible to last until this day – we may not be able to grow up. You would definitely not say, “What is in the mother’s milk? I have to know clearly before drinking it.” When we grow up, “Why does rice need to be cooked this way? I have to find out before I eat it!” How could this be possible? In a subtler sense, this also aligns with proper

worldly views [having trust or faith first before engaging in a task]. So from this perspective – in other words, I just bring them up in passing – we have to understand the apparent attitude of the precepts.

[14B, 11:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P206, L1]

After the discussion of ethical discipline, the next topic is meditative serenity. Because you are able to discipline your coarse affliction when it arises, then the coarse affliction will gradually subside. If you don't discipline it, although you are locked up in the room, your mind will still be wandering around; at that time, can you concentrate? You will be unable to concentrate, even if you force yourself to sit there and meditate – this is why some people learning meditative serenity will definitely have flaws. Whereas, if you are totally unable to learn it that might be fine. In any case, just waste some time dozing off or submerged in your wild imagination, that is all. If you tried hard to suppress [untamed mind]; because the mental force is strong, that may be the time when things will go wrong, and the meditation will be at fault. Nowadays, many say that the wrong force easily possesses them. That is because of this. If you have a sound foundation of meditative serenity, advancement is very easy. We must be clear about this, and then advance meditative serenity accordingly.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 11:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P206, L8]

“Serene” refers to having accomplished the training of meditative concentration. Meditative concentration is a mental state in which the mind remains peacefully withdrawn. This is achieved by means of reliance on

mindfulness and vigilance in your ethical discipline, turning away from wrongdoing and engaging in good activities.

This is meditative serenity. From the text earlier we learned that, ah, this is virtuous and should be done and, for those unfamiliar things that we didn't feel like doing, now [we need to] do it. For the nonvirtuous deeds, refrain from doing them – although the preference has always been there, now [we] stop from doing it. Virtuous deeds should be acted upon, nonvirtuous ones should be stopped, and this is how it should be. Therefore, by doing this, what is it considered? It is the reliance on mindfulness and vigilance in your ethical discipline – proper recognition and mindfulness are required. If you can tame the coarse affliction in this manner, the next step is to apply this tamed mind. On one hand, the mind is already familiar with how to discipline itself so the coarse affliction is tamed. The following step is to practice to tame the subtler [afflictions]. This time, the appearance of the mind is known as “meditative serenity.” This “ethical discipline and meditative serenity” have this certain reciprocating sequence, the cause and effect relationship. If we consider this ethical discipline as just superficial pretense then its relationship with meditative serenity becomes totally separated, and this should be noted. By then, the mind will “remain peacefully withdrawn” – the mind maintains the most peaceful state, this is the meditative serenity. Upon attainment of this meditative serenity, then apply this pacified mind to further analyze on a profound level to recognize the true reality of the worldly condition; this is “wisdom.” Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 13:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P207, L6]

“Thoroughly pacified”

Why is it called “thoroughly pacified”? Regardless of whether it is serene or thoroughly serene state, a certain degree of serenity is required when analyzing to honestly see clearly the true nature of worldly reality, this is wisdom. So...

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 13:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P207, L9]

refers to having accomplished the training of wisdom.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 14:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P207, L14]

This is done by specifically analyzing the meaning of reality in dependence on meditative serenity, wherein the mind becomes serviceable.

Regarding meditative serenity, it is “shamatha” in Sanskrit. Translated into Chinese, it means meditative stabilization and so forth. So what is shamatha? It is to enable the mind to become “serviceable.” We don’t have this capacity now – [our] thoughts running around, ah, either too excited or too depressed. You try to dominate the mind, yet it is just like rawhide. You cannot make it flexible, just like that. So, after your attainment of meditative serenity, the mind will do as you wish, whatever you wish, hence it is called “serviceable”.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 14:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P208, L2]

However, to have only the good qualities of knowledge that come from disciplining the mind with the three trainings is not sufficient.

By then, you can truly analyze the ultimate truth, which is not accessible to the distracted mind. This is the training of wisdom. These are the three precious trainings: ethical discipline, meditative concentration, and wisdom. However, to actually teach others, are these three sufficient? It is not sufficient, not at all. Following requirements are needed, as well.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 14:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P208, L5]

Teachers must also have the good qualities of scriptural learning.

The good qualities of scriptural learning are also required. What are these good qualities of scriptural learning?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 14:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P208, L7]

Therefore, “wealth of scriptural knowledge” refers to being erudite concerning the three scriptural collections and the like.

Also, this requires being erudite in the sutras, precepts, and commentaries. For you to truthfully teach others, it is different from self-study. For self-study, just figure out the path you want to be on, whereas teaching others requires broader understanding of the audience. Although you still don't have the actual attainment of Buddhahood, Buddha's entire experience in its totality is telling you to apply the

effort of the three precious trainings [ethical discipline, meditative serenity and wisdom] to clearly distinguish the general and specific teachings. With your clear conceptual understanding, then helping others should be not too far off. Thus, [the teacher] still needs to have a wealth of scriptural knowledge. The good quality of hearing is to support the understanding of broader scriptural knowledge. Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 15:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P208, L13]

Geshe Drom-don-ba (dGe-bshes[‘Brom]-ston-pa) said that when the “gurus of the Mahayana” give an explanation, they must cause their students to have a deep understanding. When they are putting the teachings into practice, they must demonstrate what is helpful at a time when the teaching is on the wane, and what is useful in the situation at hand.

Virtuous teacher Drom-don-ba said: “What is this Guru of Mahayana like? When the guru speaks, the students will be initiated with deep understanding.” It is not merely telling you, “this is the [knowledge] you need!” It is not like that! The Mahayana teacher is capable of resolving all sorts of issues, totally settling them. As for the recognition of the encompassing teachings – it is of virtuous and complete quality, and perfect knowledge. Therefore, when you practice accordingly, he will teach you in a systematic order unmistakably – what is the immediate benefit and what will the future ultimate effect be like? Thus, it is flawless between cause and effect, and the systematic sequence is completely in order. With these [good qualities], he is then a true virtuous teacher. So, here, the true instruction is to guide us to the cause of taking the grand path of *Array of Stalks Sutra* [proper quality, sufficient

quantity and systematic order]. Furthermore, next is the “knowledge of reality.” This refers to not only thorough understanding, but also requires having the knowledge to understand true reality.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 16:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P209, L9]

“Knowledge of reality” refers to a special training in wisdom

The three precious trainings [ethical discipline, meditative serenity, and wisdom] were mentioned in the preceding discussion. What is the difference between this wisdom and the wisdom in the knowledge-of-reality? For ultimate wisdom, we can describe it in three steps: study, contemplation, and meditation. It can be further extended into six sub-steps: “study” and “wisdom arising from study”; “contemplation” and “wisdom arising from contemplation”; “meditation” and “wisdom arising from meditation.” Hence, this knowledge of reality is the wisdom that arises from meditation – the actual attainment of selflessness of phenomena. That would be the Mahayana entry level Bodhisattva after reaching the *path-of-seeing. This is how it works.

*[*Please refer to attached chapter 4 supplemental material of 5 paths from ordinary beings to Buddhahood – path-of-accumulation, path-of-preparation, path-of-seeing, path-of-meditation, and path-of-no-more-learning.]*

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 17:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P209, L14]

the knowledge of the selflessness of phenomena. In another way, it is said to be best if the teachers have a perception of reality; but, if they do not have it, it is acceptable for them to know reality through scripture and reasoning.

The actual reference of this knowledge of reality is to attain the knowledge of the selflessness of phenomena that will be the entry-level Bodhisattva. If this is not fulfilled, it is acceptable if [the teacher] knows reality through scriptural reasoning. That would be at least at the path-of-preparation and above, or maybe path-of-accumulation who is aligned with “study and contemplation.” Usually, this is in reference to the Tian-tai school’s so-called “reaching a level of great understanding” ah, that is it – [this teacher] with such qualification is good enough! These are all on the path-of-preparation. At that time, rely on this teacher. Next is the quality that surpasses those of their students.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 18:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P210, L5]

Although teachers are endowed with these good qualities of scriptural learning and knowledge,

The fourth quality is wealth of scriptural knowledge and the fifth quality is knowledge of reality. The former is about scriptural knowledge and the latter is experiential knowledge. These are the two good qualities. As for the ethical discipline, meditative serenity, and wisdom [the three precious training] preside over [these two good qualities]!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 18:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P210, L9]

it is not enough for them to have good qualities that are equal to or lower than those of their students; instead, they need qualities that surpass those of their students.

If the teacher's good qualities are equal to or inferior to yours, this will not work. Of course, for us, we don't even have too many good qualities, and those who have some are considered pretty good. However, for actual Buddhist practitioners, from the very first step all the way to Buddhahood, even the level before Buddhahood still requires reliance on excellent teachers. Here for this excellent teacher's perfect qualities, in other words, after all, he has to be better than you! Is merely being better enough? No, it is not enough. For instance, if we don't know much and he shows off like a jack-of-all-trades, this will not do either. Thus, we have to be very clear about the systematic order, be very clear. What is the minimum qualification for the teacher? It is: [the teacher] should have gone through the stages of the three precious trainings and in addition, have good qualities that surpass yours. If you don't have any [good qualities], then for him to have the three precious trainings, of course he is better than you.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 19:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P211, L3]

The *Verses about Friends* (Mitra-varga) says:

People degenerate by relying on those inferior to themselves;

By relying on equal, they stay the same;

By relying on those superior, they attain excellence;

Thus rely on those who are superior to yourself.

The *Verses about Friends* tells us this. This is a commentary written by a Bodhisattva. For all of you! If you

rely on one who is inferior, you will degenerate. Later, it specifically explained that in order to train in Buddhism, one must rely on an excellent teacher. The best is to have an excellent teacher. The worst thing that could happen is to have a bad teacher. If you rely on someone inferior to you, then you will regress. If you rely on someone who is equal to you, then no one can improve. If you rely on someone who is superior to you, you will make progress. So we must rely on those superior to us.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 20:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P211, L9]

**If you rely on whomever is superior - thoroughly pacified
And endowed with ethical discipline
And exceeding wisdom -
You will become superior even to those who are superior.**

Among these reasons, this commentary repeated the characteristics of excellent teachers again. What should [they] be like? These should be primarily based on ethical discipline, meditative serenity, and wisdom. The teacher should also be superior to you. Following this systematic order, this type of person is the most superior and excellent. Now another great teacher,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 20:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P211, L13]

Pu-chung-wa (Phu-chung-ba) said, “when I hear the stories of excellent persons, I emulate them.”

Pu-chung-wa was one of the three spiritual sons of Venerable Drom-don-ba, the main one receiving Drom-don-ba’s mind training. What did Pu-chung-wa say? He said: “I have noticed past practitioners, those biographies of ancient teachers and Bodhisattvas, ah; I emulate and venerate them so much!” I also have this same experience. So, I too encourage you all to read more about the great teachers’ biographies and stories of cause and effect. You will automatically be inspired to advance. It is not necessary to understand too many concepts.

Without the preceding foundation, if you try to understand these concepts, that may not necessarily be good – the sequence should be correct - orderly. With this attitude, then, upon understanding the concept, it can immediately be applied. Without this foundation, knowing the concept may very possibly harm you. By then, your eyes will look at others with haughty air, nothing will be right in your view. At that time, it is like “a helpful deity that turns into a demon.” Ah! You will have unparalleled hardship! This is most miserable!

[14B, 21:25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P212, L5]

Without the preceding foundation, if you try to understand these concepts, that may not necessarily be good – the sequence should be correct - orderly. With this attitude, then, upon understanding the concept, it can immediately be applied. Without this foundation, knowing the concept may very possibly harm you. By then, your eyes will look at others with haughty air, nothing will be right in your view. At that time, it is like “a helpful deity that turns into a demon.”

Ah! You will have unparalleled hardship! This is most miserable! For now, it may be that [we] don't know what is appropriate. Later, this kind of mentality will lead us to downfall. Once you truly understand the subjective aspects of karma, as soon as you will analyze it, it becomes evident. By then, you will be frightened. Thus, we now need to observe what the excellent teachers do.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 22:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P212, L12]

Ta-shi said,

This is another excellent teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P72; 14B, 22:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P212, L14]

“I imitate the elders of the Ra-dreng (Ra-sgreng) monastic community.”

“Ra-dreng” was the monastery built by Venerable Drom-don-ba during his time. After Venerable Atisha passed away, Venerable Drom-don-ba inherited the teachings and built the Ra-dreng [Reting] Monastery there. For instance, the aforementioned Bo-do-wa, Pu-chung-wa, and Jen-nga-wa, and even the later generations such as Kagyu and Gelug schools, their main teachings came from this Monastery. So for us [Chinese] now, those great teachers at the prime of Tang dynasty can be described as the elders we want to emulate. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 23:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P213, L6]

Thus you must emulate those whose good qualities surpass your own.

We must emulate them wholeheartedly. The steps are very clear. When we see Buddhas and Bodhisattvas now, we would feel, wow, they just feel too far away. Buddha readily sacrificed his life, head and marrow to others. We are much too far from this act. But when we look to the ancient teachers! They seem closer to us. Thus, naturally, they can influence and guide us. Just like in the **Chapter of the Parable of the Manifest City* in the *Lotus Sutra*, those ancient teachers are just like a city of manifestation to us. We can find our direction from the [ancient teachers], and continue to look ahead, eventually seeing how the Buddha is, at the highest level.

*[*Please refer to tape 1B for the explanation of the Parable of the Manifest City]*

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 23:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P213, L12]

These six qualities being disciplined, serene, and thoroughly pacified, having good qualities that surpass those of the students, the wealth of knowledge from studying many scriptures, and thorough knowledge of reality --- are the good qualities obtained for oneself. The remaining qualities --- being energetic, having skill in instruction, possessing loving concern, and abandoning dispiritedness are the good qualities for looking after others.

The above are qualifications that excellent teachers should possess, and the remainder is to look after others! For a true excellent teacher will not only discipline himself,

but he will also help others and support them. The following statement is very important. Prior to helping others, there is a passage here. Why does it say that? Let's take a look:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 24:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P214, L2]

Further it says:

**Sages do not wash away sins with water,
They do not clear away beings' suffering with their
hands,
They do not transfer their own knowledge to others;
They liberate by teaching the truth of reality.**

Buddha does not use water to wash away your sins, nor does he use his hands. Even though he has supernatural power, well, he cannot remove your suffering and he absolutely can't transfer his knowledge to you. What will he do? He will truthfully tell you the contents of the teachings, explain to you, and teach you to apply earnestly to attain liberation. So why does the author insert this section here? This is to specifically tell us: after recognizing the characteristics of an excellent teacher, you rely on an excellent teacher [for higher attainment]. It does not mean that, as long as you lean on him, then he will just blow air at you and shape you like a clay statue so that you morph into a Buddha. It is not like that. Buddha tells you the principles of Buddha Dharma. You still have to earnestly learn and apply diligently. At that time, liberation will arise.

[14B, 25:24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P214, L11]

This is why I want to encourage you all to read the biographies of great teachers. Otherwise, we may always

feel, “Alas, I am an ordinary being now. I will prostrate over here and maybe one of these days through the prostrations, enlightenment will happen! Ah, that would be great!” There is no such thing, absolutely no such thing! There is never an exception to this. You must understand. Thus, we have to listen to the teachings. If you listen without grasping the principle, then the same result will happen – the more [you] listen, the further [you are from the teaching]. The more the teaching is explained, the further you are! This is a critical concept. Next, it tells us:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 25:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P215, L2]

Thus, buddhas perform no action --- such as “washing away others’ sins with water” other than looking after others by accurately showing them the path.

To sum this up in one statement: besides accurately showing you the path by looking after you, there is definitely no other way to wash away your sins. Here, I will ask a question: since Buddha told us that there is no way to wash away our sins other than to give us the “teaching,” and, after listening to it, we have to be mindful of the “Dharma.” So why do we need to be mindful of “Buddha”? Doesn’t this sound contradictory? Everyone think about it! Now we want to be mindful of Buddha and if, according to this statement, we should be mindful of the teaching, wouldn’t mindfulness of Buddha become useless? Well, being mindful of Buddha is useful! What is the key point? This is a test for you. Next week, each one of you will give me an answer. And then I will grade you based on the answer. I will explain this again later.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 27:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P215, L10]

Among the four qualities of looking after others,

Next, the text explains how to look after others, [we will] go over the first one.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 27:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P215, L12]

“skill in instructing disciples” refers to being both skilled in the process of leading disciples

This “skill in instructing disciples” is not only that you have to understand, but also, [you] need to know how to skillfully explain it. This sequence is about the skillful means of guiding others.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 27:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P216, L2]

and adept at causing them to understand.

Deliver the concept so that it is skillfully imbued in the mind of the audience; be adept at causing them to understand. This is very important.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 14B, 28:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P216, L5]

“Possessing loving concern” refers to having a pure motivation of giving the teachings. That is, the teacher teaches with a motivation of love and compassion and does not look for gain, respect, and so on.

What is “possessing loving concern”? It is when you are explaining the teaching – of course it is to benefit others! The “motivation” means your motivation of teaching has to be pure instead of impure. Nowadays, this is very hard to avoid, very difficult to avoid! Truthfully, for those who give the teachings, there aren’t many who will do it for material things, fame, profit, etc. However, what do [we] do? We do what accords with our latent propensities, just like that. Let’s not talk about the subtle and deep latent propensities. Even for the ten nonvirtuous deeds, [just take] senseless speech among the four verbal actions [for example]. Senseless speech is the desire from beginningless time to speak, to speak about useless things. Sigh, that is, you sit there with nothing to do and talk continuously, can’t help but saying something! There happens to be a group of people sitting there listening to you, so you talk with great enthusiasm! Normally, this is the hardest situation for us to avoid. It is not necessarily for the sake of fame, honor or profit, yet it corresponds with affliction. This will not work. Therefore, the actual explanation of the teaching is done with “possessing loving concern.”

[00:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 219, L1]

This motivation is the intention when you are explaining the teaching. And, while giving teaching the preparation certainly [is important]. The corresponding mental attitude afterwards should always be purified. What is purification? It is not to “look for gain, respect, and so on.” If not for these afflictions, instead what should it be? It should be “love and compassion”; that is, you mindfully for the benefit of others and help others. This love and compassion also has a specific reason or should have a specific standard. We will gradually understand this standard step by step in the future.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 15A, 00:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P219, L6]

Bo-do-wa said to Jen-nga-wa (sPyan-snga-ba), “Son of Li-mo, however many teachings I have explained, I have never taken pleasure in even a single thanks. All beings are helpless.” A teacher should be like this.

These two Dharma brothers said, “So and so! Regardless of how many teachings I have explained, I have never taken pleasure in even a single thanks!” Others would certainly praise him by saying, “You explained well!” Although others said this, he was very clear within, very aware in his mind: “My explanation (of the Dharma) is not given for this purpose!” Why? Because he sensed the sufferings of the sentient beings, that is generated from his compassion. What is the benefit here? If you find yourself in such situation, you must uphold this foundation of the Dharma in your mind. Hold on to it so you that you will not be swayed.

Otherwise, when we are explaining the teaching, unknowingly, we may lean toward our preference, well, just like that! If there is any fame or profit today – for the sake of fundraising, one deliberately praises generosity today and tomorrow praises something else. Today, [one is] in a good mood and will exaggerate a great deal for the pleasure of senseless speech. Tomorrow, the mood is not right, [one will] close the mouth and go to sleep! This of course is not in accord [with the teaching]. The same applies to the audience that is listening. This is the main reason why I bring it up. This is about “possessing loving concern.” Next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 15A, 02:17; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P220, L7]

“Energetic” refers to constant delight in others’ welfare. “Has abandoned dispiritedness” refers to never being tired of giving an explanation again and again – to bearing the hardships of explaining.

This is not only possessing compassion, but also requires diligence – being endowed with energy. At the actual session of explaining the teachings, well, it is not an easy task to help others! A tough task! I believe we all have this experience. Needless to say about explaining the teachings, here [in the monastery], our easiest task is cooking. Ah, aspired to cook and hence go to the kitchen. Sigh, it is a difficult task! One wants bland food, another wants flavorful food, another wants something soft, yet another does not want soft food. Thus, you do not know what to do. Before doing all of this, [your] mind is filled with aspiration but after two days, [you] claim to have had enough.

[15A, 03:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P220, L13]

It is the same with Buddha Dharma. To discipline others – for the sake of taming my own affliction [I] may say this – however, to help others, it is totally different. Thus, for earnest application of Buddha Dharma, although benefiting the self is hard, to benefit others is even more difficult. At that time, when trying to help others with energetic compassion, more than great wisdom is required; great joyous perseverance is also needed. So while helping others, be brave, intrepid, unyielding, and determined! This “brave” is forging ahead; the “intrepid” is fearlessness; “unyielding” is not breakable; and with assertive determination.

[15A, 03:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P221, L4]

Stay away from “dispiritedness” – never think this is impossible or that is impossible. It is not easy to abandon dispiritedness. Later, the author will teach us all sorts of skillful means, once you understand it and apply accordingly, you will naturally become proficient. Otherwise, just by reading the text, we have heard and read it. Now we feel, how satisfying. However, at time of application before even starting, you have already fled at the sight of it. Therefore, in this situation, not being able to flinch from it “refers to never being tired of giving an explanation again and again – to bearing the hardships of explaining.” This concludes [the ten qualities], energetic is the fifth one, abandoning dispiritedness is the last. There are a total of ten characteristics – these ten are endowed with encompassing fulfillment.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 15A, 04:42; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P221, L10]

Bo-do-wa said: These five qualities – loving concern, knowledge of reality, and the three trainings – are foremost.

Among them, the three trainings, knowledge of reality and loving concern are foremost, the primary; the rest are supplemental. He then cited an example:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 15A, 04:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P221, L13]

My master Shang-tsun (Zhang-btsun) is not very learned with regard to all the scriptures and cannot

withstand dispiriting circumstances. Therefore, he does not even thank those who help him. However, since he has these five qualities, he is helpful to whomever is in his presence.

Bo-do-wa had a teacher, a teacher that he relied on – Shang-tsun. This teacher actually was not very learned and could not withstand laborious work. He was not good at normal conversation, even at social greetings. However, he possessed the aforementioned three trainings and knowledge of reality, as well as loving concern. Anyone close to him benefited – virtuous teachers are like this. Now, I recall Venerable Ren was the same. He was not skilled in social greetings either. Often seeing him, I rarely noticed him chatting socially for more than five minutes. Most likely after three statements, it was over. That was it! You might still sit there for five minutes and he remained as he was. I once read Venerable Hong-yi’s biography. Well! I believe there are people like [Venerable Hong-yi], still people like that. By relying on him, the benefits will be [ours]!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 15A, 06:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P222, L8]

Nyen-don (gNyan-ston) ,

Next is another teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P73; 15A, 06:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P222, L10]

does not have any skill in speech at all. Even when giving a single dedication of an offering, he can only think, “None of these people here understands what I

am saying.” But, as he has the five qualities, he is helpful to whomever enters his presence.

This other teacher is Nyen-don, he was also the same - not skillful in speech, totally not good at conversation. Even to dedicate the offering – that is when the benefactors come and to bless them, we usually will say, “May the three Jewels bless you or may you have more blissfulness and longevity...” and so forth. He was not able to say this, and [even if] he said it, people could not understand what he was saying, just like that. [Nyen-don] was such a person! Well, due to his endowment of the five qualities above, for anyone around him, it didn’t matter who it was [because] the benefit was there. This is the characteristic of virtuous teachers stated earlier - the qualifications. The two examples of virtuous teachers were brought to us in the quote by Bo-do-wa about the two teachers. Let’s look at the text below.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15A, 07:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P223, L5]

This being the case, those who achieve their own livelihood by praising or explaining the good qualities of the trainings, while not striving diligently to practice them, are not suitable to be teachers.

He does not practice seriously and is not even inspired to practice delightfully and single-mindedly, but merely praises this and admires the teaching by talking about what are the benefits, what are the benefits. We have to be very clear about this concept, experience and recognize it very clearly and explicitly. That is, for us Dharma practitioners,

each one of us has great admiration towards the Buddha's teaching – ah, Buddha is so remarkable, truly extraordinary. This is an attitude of praise of the Three Jewels, but what is more important is how should we learn [from the Three Jewels], how to study. These are two different things , these are two separate matters.

[15A, 09:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P223, L13]

Therefore, in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks*, there was such a case: one great practitioner had high achievement in this lifetime. Prior to his passing, many monastic and lay disciples came to request his teaching. Imploring his imparting of the teachings, everyone felt that this was a great practitioner with experiential accomplishment so this imparting of the teaching should be very profound. However, he quoted four verses from the *Sutra on Precepts*: “Refrain from all nonvirtuous, engage in all virtues, and purify one's mind, this is what Buddha taught”. All of them listened for more to be said, but that was it! All were disappointed and said, “What? That is it?” (This great practitioner's comment was,) “All of you are pretty good (practitioners), and everyone looks up to this excellent Teacher to learn from. Meaning that, everyone pays respect to those with moral integrity. Yet you don't know how to apply (the teachings) accordingly, how he attained such achievement. Hence, there is a saying: “Everyone knows to respect those with moral integrity, yet not realize by abiding (the teachings), one can achieve the same.” I wrote this on the board, just like this. Everyone knows to respect, venerate, and praise those with moral integrity by saying, “Ah, this person is remarkable, remarkable!” However, there is one thing that is more important for us: if you apply it (the teachings) accordingly, then you can also have the same achievement.

[15A, 11:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P224, L8]

Certainly, to praise and so on is extremely beneficial because this will be a goal that we seek wholeheartedly, become the purpose of our aspiration, just like that. But if you really want to accomplish this, what would it mean? You will have to conscientiously practice according to the teaching. This is what is important. Thus, after this great teacher finished speaking, he added: “Sigh, it is truly pitiful! Very pathetic!” This “lament” is a classic Chinese expression. In other words, “If you all sincerely apply it accordingly, the achievement will be yours. Don’t overlook these simple statements!” These few statements were easily said and you can give an extravagant account of them like falling flower petals from the sky, but in reality, will that be of any value? Will it truly help you? No! This is a noteworthy precaution for us.

[15A, 12:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P224, L14]

Therefore, what is important for us now is not to criticize others from head to toe. When someone is good, [we would be] full of praise. When he is not good, [we would] criticize him. You need to examine yourself [and think] what should I be doing? [We should] “emulate the virtuous.” Seeing his brilliance, think : how can I learn from him; how did he accomplish it? Look for the cause of his success. If you are able to strive at it, you will become like him – that is achieve Buddhahood. “When seeing non-virtuous ones, reflect within”, when seeing others’ flaws, reflect on the self by saying: “Well, I should not be like that!” We should

never criticize others from head to toe, which is completely meaningless, absolutely senseless.

[15A, 12:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P225, L4]

Pay attention here! What we should be inspired to do is to develop the yearning to apply the teaching. It is because we want to apply the teaching so [we] need to listen to more teachings. This is important. Hence, to be very learned [with regards to the scriptures] is necessary. However, if we unfortunately get this wrong and just explain the teaching to others in our own interpretation, sigh, this is very pitiful. What kind of fault will this produce? You would be “praising the trainings” – that is to say, “Well, the Buddha Dharma is great!” and [attempting to] convince others everywhere, but lacking personal aspiration in applying it. This is a loss. This is one kind. Or, you may be “praising or explaining the good qualities of the training,” by saying, “Well! If you do it this way you will accumulate great merits; for so and so [did it] and has high advancement.” What would you be doing this for? It is to “achieve one’s own livelihood” – to make a living out of it. This explanation here is even more practical, very pragmatic! The earlier reference of fame and profit, so on and so forth can be summed up into one statement: what is the purpose for us to [praise] it? [If it] is for the sake of this [fame and profit] – it is incorrect, it is wrong! In this situation, one is “not suitable to be teachers.” This type of person cannot be an excellent teacher. Next it says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15A, 14:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P225, L13]

That sort of meaningless praise is only words. It is similar to when someone who diligently seeks

sandalwood asks one who makes a living by explaining the good qualities of sandalwood, “Do you have any sandalwood?” and that person replies, “No”.

It is just like someone saying: “Wow, this sandalwood incense is very good!” Why does he do so? Well, it is for the sake of promoting quack remedies as a way of making a living. Hence, people with true interest came and asked, “Do you have [this incense]?” “No, don’t have it.” In this situation, it is all empty talk – meaningless, idle talk. This sandalwood is not necessarily the kind of incense that we burn now. In Buddha Dharma, the sandalwood is referred to as a special Santalum album that can destroy any poison – all poisons. With one little touch, any poison will be eliminated. No more needs to be said as to how fragrant it can be.

[15A, 15:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P226, L7]

In Chinese history, once during the Han Dynasty, there was an envoy from the Western Regions that traveled to offer a tribute. In the offering tribute, there was the “special Santalum album.” How much was there? A total of about 0.2 grams. [In the ancient Chinese weight measuring system,] a catty (斤), fifty grams (兩), five grams (錢), and what is next? It is 0.5 grams (分) followed by 0.05 grams. This 0.2 grams is a very small amount – fifty grams is already a very small amount, needless to say that it is further divided into 0.4 percent [of the total]. Back then, the royal system for any precious tribute had a minimum quantity. Thus, this was not even fifty grams. It was unknown to the minister – [the Santalum album incense was treated] as a joke instead of recognizing it as a priceless treasure. At that time, that official, whose title was unknown – he should have been

equivalent to our present Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At that time, there was the Ministry of Rites in China. Prior to paying respect to the emperor, one first had to encounter the chancellor of the Ministry of Rites. So [the minister of rites] examined all related items and rejected the 0.2 grams tribute. The amount did not qualify! Thus, the tribute of incense was not accepted.

[15A, 17:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P227, L1]

That envoy was very clever, very smart. Since the tribute was not accepted, it was fine. The following morning he took out a very, very small amount of the incense to represent the 0.2 grams of the special Santalum album and lit it. Once lit, the entire area, scores of square kilometers, was filled with the fragrance. The aroma was heavenly. That morning at the palace assembly, everyone smelled it and wondered where this never-before-smelled fragrance came from. Everyone asked: “This is an auspicious sign. Where did the fragrance come from?” No one knew – it was unknown to them. At that time, the envoy was in the assembly, [his] manner and facial expression was very unique; hence, the chancellor of the Ministry of Rites who was beside him thought the envoy probably had something to do with it and asked him about it. The envoy replied, “It is inconvenient to talk now.” So after the assembly was over, the chancellor asked: “So you know about it?” “Yes.” “What is it?” “This is what I offered as tribute.” “Well, why did you not bring it in together with other tributes?” “According to the royal rules, the tribute has to be at least fifty grams; now I only have 0.2 grams, I can’t do anything about it.” “Ah, this qualifies as an exception.” So it was reported and finally accepted. Such a case of the special Santalum album incense appeared in Chinese history. Therefore, with regard to this incense –

when in search of the precious sandalwood, there was a case like this.

[15A, 18:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P227, L14]

We now have this as an analogy. In fact, it tells us that [the incense] has all sorts of auspicious effects; however, it must be real, must be authentic. It is not just something we talk about, or personal admiration or praising, or even doing it for the sake of personal livelihood, be it for fame, honor, profit or gains. All of this is empty talk and a mere elaboration of words! Next, it cites from the scriptures to validate:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15A, 19:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P228, L2]

As the *King of Concentrations Sutra* states:

In later times there will be

Many monks without vows.

Wanting to say, “I am learned,”

They will praise ethical discipline,

But will not strive diligently at their own ethical discipline.

Having also said this concerning concentration, wisdom, and liberation,

This is talking about the degenerate time – not to mention ordinary beings, but even for monastics – monastics are meant to wholeheartedly strive to attain liberation. Hence, [monastics] have to understand the teaching profoundly. However, in the degenerate time, there are no vows, or there won't even be any vows. What are the vows of ethical discipline? I mentioned it briefly last time. Does everyone

understand what are the vows of ethical discipline? Often, we refer to them as precepts. There are several terms: vows, not considered as vows, and not considered as vows but similar to a vow. This will not be discussed for now. We will have review sessions starting next week or the week after. There will be evening classes. At that time, I will bring questions to ask you all. Especially those classmates who have been here longer, I hope you will thoroughly review the materials. If anything is unfamiliar, please look it up in the dictionary. Here, this section just briefly mentions ethical discipline. We would often refer to them as precept.

[15A, 20:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P228, L12]

So in the text, it says in degenerate times, the monastics do not possess the precepts but only seek scriptural learning. The precepts and being learned in the scriptures here, we may take them as two separate things. Certainly, if you do not understand them, then they are two different things. If you truly understand, you will know that they are the same thing. If you truly aspire to study the precepts well, proper recognition is required. This proper recognition arises from study. Now you understand and study more and after that, if you do not apply it, it is of no value and useless! So the preceding concept was already repeatedly mentioned. This vow or precept does not mean that we shaved our heads today and asked, "What is your monastic age?" "I am ten and you are fifteen years." This is the external appearance. There is a special meaning behind it. This is what sila truly is, what the precepts are. So I wrote these terms on the board. You can take a look. Ancient practitioners explained "essence of the precepts" as "the invisible moral essence of ethical discipline." Why is it called the "invisible moral essence of ethical discipline"? Why can

the precepts prevent wrongdoings and stop non-virtues? Why is it to truly study the three precious trainings, we must begin from here? This is where the key lies for us. The reason why they mention sila here – if you speak of it in its entirety, it is Buddha Dharma. It is because this is a necessary entry point for Buddhism. If this is missing, then there is no need to talk about anything else. If you have this, then the rest will naturally follow.

[15A, 22:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P229, L9]

This is the reason. Hence, in the sutra, it was prophesized that “praising ethical discipline, but not striving diligently at applying ethical discipline.” This is the condition. Therefore, some may think, “Well, since the sutra already predicted it, so we should just not care anymore!” This is a view that many possess nowadays. This view must be changed, have to be replaced! How do the practitioners of Buddha Dharma differ from people of the mundane world? People of the mundane world may totally deny cause and effect and also negate the concept of the three lifetimes [past, present and future lives]. These are the most ignorant ones. Whereas other people may talk about fate, but this belief in fate becomes a belief in the predestination of the three lifetimes. In other words, everything is predestined. The fate is sealed. This is actually erroneous, too.

[15A, 23:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P229, L15]

Hence, there is a good book, Liao-Fan’s Four Lessons. I believe that majority of you know it. In the first part of his life, he listened to a fortuneteller who foretold a fixed destiny. However, after he met Yun-Gu-Fa-Hui Zen Master,

he began to understand Buddha's Teachings. By applying the concepts of the Teaching, he completely changed his destiny. What does this mean? It means that the true characteristic of Buddha's Teaching, is? It is karma and dependent arising. In worldly terms, it is cause and effect. Since there is cause and effect, for a particular type of cause, a resulting effect will correspondingly arise. Where does the cause come from? You created it yourself. What was done in past lives cannot be changed, so leave it as is. However, this life is similarly a cause. As long as you strive, then things will change. Isn't this very clear? So, the karma we have accumulated from beginningless time, be it specific karma or collective karma, we have consequently been born in this age of degeneration. Yes, if you are an ordinary being, then you are destined to remain like this. Since you are already applying Buddha Dharma, then may I ask: "do you want to be controlled by fate or do you want to create your own destiny?" The characteristic of Buddha Dharma tells us, well! It is karma and dependent arising, and the causes of karma are in our own hands. As long as you make effort, the improvement is immediate.

[15A, 24:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P230, L10]

Mr. Yuan (Liao Fan) was an ordinary person. He understood this simple concept and applied accordingly. Thus, his destiny was transformed. Whereas we Buddha Dharma practitioners - even those aspiring to be the teacher-of-human-and-deity – surprisingly may say, "Ah! This is fate." Since fate is such, we just sit there and let it controls us. Is this Buddha Dharma? Regardless of who the fortuneteller is, whether it is an average fortuneteller or Buddha, they could give the same prediction, right? So when everyone hears this now, [they would say], "Sigh, it is

the degenerate time. Just let it go, leave it be!” This statement is totally wrong. Is it not the degenerate time? Not so. We have to understand what is degenerate time, this is indisputable. However, Buddha said, “Since it is the degenerate time, you must quickly strive!” This is what you should do. This is the true intent of Buddha Dharma! So my understanding is: “it is precisely because of this degenerate time that we have to work even harder.” As long as you strive at it, you will be able to advance.

[15A, 25.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P231, L3]

Thus, in the sutra, it states in many sections that there are also degenerate times even during the Buddha’s time when the sublime teachings existed. If you do not put the teachings into practice, it is the same [as degenerate times]. On the contrary, during the degenerate times, if you sincerely uphold the teaching, then the sublime teaching from Buddha’s time will remain. It is entirely up to you. Although the present effect cannot be changed, as this is due to the causes planted in the past which have reached its fruition and we are not able to change; however, the immediate cause is in every thought of ours, and then it influences each physical and verbal behavior at this very moment. You will be clearly and assertively thinking, “from now on, starting from my thoughts, my actions will abide by the sublime teaching of Buddha’s time; then this is right! This is the way to go!” So here, [this is what we] need to understand, just to mention it on the side. Never think: “This is degenerate time, Buddha already said so.” No, not like that! This concept will be further discussed later. Thus, the precepts are as such – the root [of the three precious trainings]. The higher trainings, “concentration, wisdom, and

liberation” are the same as well. “Having also said this concerning” [the following attitude] is incorrect!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15A, 26:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P231, L11]

the *King of Concentrations Sutra* states:

**Some people express
The good qualities of sandalwood
Saying, “Sandalwood is like this:
It is the pleasant aspect of incense.”
Then some other people
Might ask them, “Do you possess
A bit of that sandalwood
Which you so praise?”
They then reply, “I do not have
The incense that I praise
To gain my livelihood.**

Moreover, just like some people will admire and praise, wow, the good qualities of sandalwood – endowed with all kinds of benefits and such fragrance! Thus, some others may ask, “You mentioned that this thing is so great, do you have it?” The reply is, “Very sorry, I only praise of the incense for the sake of my livelihood, I do not really have this incense.” This person is actually not that bad. This person is considered pretty honest. If we were that honest, then it would not be bad! It is a pity that we don’t even have this least bit of honesty. Hence, next it states:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15A, 28:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P232, L5]

**Just so, in later times there will arise
Monks who do not strive at yoga**

And make a living by praising ethical discipline.

They will have no ethical discipline.

The sutra states the same for the remaining three qualities – concentration, wisdom, and liberation.

What is the sign of a degenerate time? Just like the degenerate conditions: these people are not sincere about study. “Yoga” means to accord. What is accordance? It is, once you understand the concept, how do you accord with the concept? Oh, this concept tells us that our present state is in the midst of afflictions and defilements, how to transform and purify, and then you abide accordingly to align with the concept. This is what we should do, what we should strive at diligently. However, we do not act this way now. Thus it says, “do not strive at yoga.” Well, [we] do not strive [at application]. Yet [we] just praise the precepts by saying, “Wow, it is great!” Bragging about it to everyone and everywhere – these attitudes are very pathetic, totally lacking the true essence [of the teaching]. “For the remaining three qualities,” other than ethical discipline, the same [concept] applies to the other three: concentration, wisdom and liberation. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15B, 00:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P233, L1]

The guru who helps you to achieve liberation is the foundation of your deepest aspiration.

We need to recognize that, for sincere practitioners like us seeking liberation, the teacher - this guru is our teacher; and in particular the teacher we rely on. Nowadays, we usually don't emphasize this much: I am going to be ordained and randomly find a teacher to shave my head. In any case, after he shaved my head and I take the vows; thus [we]

manage to establish a center, and I can be there to make my mark. It does not work like this, not for Buddha Dharma. Actually, the ancient scholars looked for teachers with great discretion and, once found, [the disciple] would rely on [the teacher] for the entire life.. [This teacher] is able to help you transform from an ordinary person to a sage – this person is qualified as a guru. He could be your abbot, preceptor or the teacher to be relied upon, which is known as your master; and there are your other teachers as well. There are different types of teachers and this one is our guru. [We] need to know this is “the foundation of your deepest aspiration.” Normally, the happiness that we seek in the secular world is not thorough -- this speck of happiness that you have achieved for the time being, will lead to major suffering in the future. However, this deepest aspiration for the pursuit of ultimate happiness requires us to invest some cost at the present moment. You have to strive at studying diligently and, in the future, the attainment of ultimate liberation will be possible. This is all dependent on the virtuous teacher – one’s own guru.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15B, 01:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P234, L3]

Therefore, you who wish to rely on a guru should understand these defining characteristics and strive to seek one who has them.

Hence, for those serious about liberation, one has to look for a qualified teacher as your virtuous guru. So, in such circumstances, [we] should recognize, well, the so-called person worth relying on – the one who can actually help your attainment – should have what kind of qualifications. Then strive to seek someone with such qualifications. It is

really worthwhile. This is what we truly should engage in, be occupied by this, just work on it.

[15B, 02:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P234, L8]

Thus, I told you about *A Casual Talk of a Dream* and other [books]; which include the biographies of Great Masters in China. Moreover, even with several of the recently introduced books from India, there are the biographies of Venerable Atisha and [other] Tibetans – read them carefully. However, we may not understand the actual content. For example, *The Biography of Milarepa* is very touching but, in fact, we don't understand much of it. What I suggest you to look at right now is in the beginning, when he searched for a teacher and abided by his teacher – the entire search will inspire our deepest praise and admiration from within, at the very least it will initiate our aspiration. The detailed contents may become understandable gradually through the progress of our study, or, if there is an opportunity, we will have in-depth review of these topics. This is about looking for a teacher. What about the other points:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15B, 03:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P235, L1]

Also, those who wish to have students should understand these characteristics and strive to possess them.

Furthermore, those who wish to be teachers – that is, to be the person students rely on – also should know how to gather and guide students; embrace the students! This we have to pay attention to – often, we think that, once

ordained, somehow one would be successful by leading some disciples so one's legacy will have heirs. Although it is regarded as a good thing, however, what should be passed down and inherited? It is the Buddha's Dharma works. So, for the sake of this reasoning, first strive to endow yourself with the qualifications of Buddha Dharma, and then, when the time is right, the only concern is that you don't want to be the teacher or you only teach a little. If this qualification is not sufficient, your deeds may be successful, however, Buddha Dharma could be harmed. That is disastrous.

[15B, 04:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P235, L9]

Therefore, Buddha repeatedly said, "The bacteria on the lion feeds on the flesh of the lion." During Buddha's time, Mara (波旬魔王) constantly caused trouble for Buddha in all respects. I will describe Buddha's attitude towards him. Mara told Buddha "O Buddha! You, the elder, indeed are remarkable and I really admire you wholeheartedly. While you are still alive, I can't do anything to you but once you die and go into nirvana, it will be the time that I want to destroy you." Buddha smiled and said, "You won't be able to." Mara asked, "Do you know how I will destroy you?" Buddha replied, "Let's hear it." "Hey! By then, I will enter your monastery, put on your robes and become your disciple – this is what [I] will do!" Then Buddha tears rolled and cried! Cried! This actually happened. Hence, this is something that we should be vigilant and mindful of! Thus, Buddha specifically said that non-Buddhist could not destroy the Teachings. Who is able to? That is the practitioner within the community, like the bacteria on the lion!

[15B, 06:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P236, L1]

So, at time of destruction there will be two ways - one is “drawing lots“ (行筹), the other is “teaching resemblance Dharma.” (说相似法) What is “drawing lots”? The lots are tokens, as in “drawing lots”! In fact it is the Posadha [Sanskrit for reviewing of the precepts] in the first half of the [lunar] month, when there are arising [monastic] questions answered using the lots to check, “agree or disagree?” I have only seen the drawing of lots once; that was in India at the end of the [three month long Vassa] Buddhist Lent. I am writing the term on the board. The character representing lots in Chinese is the same as the word for token; and drawing is to describe the action. Now I will go over it for you briefly: during our Buddhist Lent [ceremony], our Buddha Shakyamuni is the first lot. You all have attended it before, right? This is the first lot. There are many attendees for sure. Maybe laypeople are not aware of it. A true Buddhist Lent does not mean, well, I am beginning my Buddhist Lent now and start receiving offerings – there is no such thing! During actual Buddhist Lent, you have to devote your entire energy at study and, because of your earnest study, the merits are accumulated and laypeople come to make offerings to you. So my attendance [at this ceremony] made me very happy and joyous. That place we used was not big, however, the monastery was filled with four or five hundred people. Everybody tried their best and perspired all over. One lot went up first – not sure how many, I forgot, they needed to be counted. The first lot was for Shakyamuni Buddha and so on so forth, followed by many great teachers of the lineage. This is the lot.

[15B, 08:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P236, L13]

When Sangha gather for processions, there are usually some issues: so how many attended today, “Have all the monastics arrived? Is the community in harmony?” And then we will count the number of attendees. The head count is not like what we normally know as roll calls or the like. It is by casting the lots: one side agrees to it, and there is the opposite side – there is a proper method. Thus, during the actual Upavasatha [Buddhist day of observance for cleansing the defiled mind], it has to be done in a purified manner; both [agreement and disagreement] are not easy, very difficult! If you are purified, that will do. Otherwise, the same applies to our current situation now – in a meeting, the more troublemakers there are, then the entire meeting system will be totally destroyed. Therefore, no one else can destroy this, other than the false type of practitioners. Once they come, then the damage is done, destruction will happen! This is the first method [drawing lots] – regards to the mistaken behavior.

[15B, 09:01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P237, L5]

The other method is “teaching resemblance Dharma” – while giving teachings he speaks inaccurately, but it is not easy for you to tell that his explanation is wrong. He even quotes the Buddhist sutras and parables during his explanation. During the session, he again comes up with his own ideas instead of relying on the lineage. Of course, all worldly things are like this and you may already have experienced – some may not have – recognizing worldly arguments totally depend on technique. Regardless of whether you are able to revive the dead or the other way

around, it is all up to you. This is the same for Buddha Dharma – if you don't rely on the lineage and abide by the systematic order, then you can say whatever you like and do whatever you please; that would be chaos. When this happens, Buddha will cry. So, for this method, I specifically clarify briefly to you that this concept has to be very clear. So “drawing lots” (行筹), and “teaching resemblance Dharma” (相似说) can be very harmful and detrimental! This is very important! Thus, to learn, one has to search for a virtuous teacher with these qualifications; to teach, one has to be able to reach this level. So what is the current situation?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15B, 10:34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P238, L1]

Question: Because this is a degenerate time, it is difficult to find a teacher who has these good qualities in their entirety.

However, due to the differences in the present time – with regard to the turning of Dharma wheels – it is very difficult to find one who has truly perfected all of the above qualities. It is very rare, very difficult.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P74; 15B, 10:56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P238, L4]

Therefore, what should we do if we do not find such a teacher?

If you are not able to find such a perfect teacher, what should you do? Let's continue, first is a quote from a sutra.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 11:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P238, L6]

Reply: The *Tantra Requested by Subahu (Subahupariprccha-tantra)* states:

**Just as a chariot with one wheel
Will not go down the path even though it has a horse,
So too, without assistants for meditation,
People will not gain attainments.**

If the chariot only has one wheel – a horse carriage needs at least two or four wheels – so, in this condition, even if the road and horse are available, very sorry, with one wheel, your chariot is useless. In other words, that is you alone [without fellow practitioners]. So what should be done? [We] have to have fellow practitioners as companions. These companions are of two types – superior-level and peer-level that we consider as virtuous teachers. The superior virtuous teachers are [our] reliance guru; another is the peer-level companion and also those companions that take care of external chores. Thus, to apply the teaching sincerely without virtuous teachers, an average person will not be able to have achievement, definitely impossible. And

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 12:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P239, L1]

**These assistants should have intelligence, a good appearance, great purity,
Be of reputable lineage, and inclined toward the teachings.**

**They should have great confidence, perseverance,
and have disciplined the senses.
They should speak pleasantly, be generous and
compassionate,
Forbear hunger, thirst, and the afflictions,
And not worship other deities and brahmins.
They should be focused, adept, grateful,
And have faith in the three jewels.**

These verses mentioned here, I will not go over them individually. In fact, for the listed ten conditions, you can relate them one by one to the earlier mentioned ten qualifications. For those who are the true practitioners of Buddha Dharma and have faith in the three Jewels, they are our best companions for applying the teachings. [They are] either one's gurus, or one's peers – practitioners like us.

***[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 13:12; Original
Commentary Script Vol 2, P239, L7]***

**Since those who have all such good qualities
Are very rare in this age of strife,
Mantra practitioners should rely on an assistant who
has
One half, one quarter, or an eighth of these qualities.**

However, for the aforementioned perfect, highly achieved practitioners, they are very rare to be found during the degenerate time, they are very few. What are the phenomena in the age of strife? The phenomenon is people are not in a hurry to be liberated. During Buddha's time, once [a disciple] understood the concept, [he] immediately applied it to analyze and reflect on the self, and then applied accordingly toward personal liberation, which is followed by helping others to be liberated. To seek for individual

liberation alone is Hinayana, the lesser vehicle; and to further advance to help others is Mahayana. Therefore, by then, there is no argument at all: everyone is of different nature and applies accordingly to study and practice – for those trying to catch up when you are done learning, turn around and help them; thus forms very harmonious atmosphere. During this degenerate time, once with some understanding, instead of applying it, the feeling is: “well, I am this way, how can you be like that.” Then, people start to argue. Moreover, if he is better than me, no doubt [I] am not convinced; whereas if he is worse than me, of course [he] will be looked down upon, [notice] how I won’t take it when he is better than me! Hence, this is the age of strife. With this condition, it is rare to have a perfectly endowed virtuous teacher with all the qualifications. This does not necessarily mean that there are none of them; they are just very rare, hard to find! So, at that time, what should be done? With half of the qualifications, just half of the [ten] qualifications, or a quarter of them, or even just one eighth of them – this teacher should be relied on for assistance. This teacher is referring to in the Tantra practice, because this scripture is from Tantra tradition. Actually, regardless of whether it is learning from the practitioners of any of the three vehicles in the Buddha Dharma teachings [sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva], they all require this [at least one eighth of qualifications]. Next, the text provides the explanation.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 15:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P240, L6]

Thus it says that assistants should have these defining characteristics in their entirety, or at least one eighth of these.

The quotes from the sutra above tell us that there are several reasons. The first is to clarify by using an example. That is, the practitioner must have reliance. Next, in the text, it states the qualifications for reliance. And, at the end, it states, in the age of strife, what should we do? The text says, have at least one eighth [of the defining characteristics]. How is this one eighth calculated? It is not easy to calculate, there are a total of ten qualities, so how do you apply this one-eighth? Know that these ten characteristics have their required systematic order; a certain order must be applied. It is like if we are building a house. For the eighth floor, that is to say, as long as the building is finished you are able to pick any level – from appearances; it is just picking one story. In fact, it doesn't matter which floor is picked, the foundation has to be there. When you pick the eighth floor, all the lower levels should exist, this is very obvious. You pick this highest eighth level, even if you reside on the top floor, let me ask, what is the eighth floor established on? It is built on top of the first to seventh floors, as well as the foundation. Thus, it is not possible for you to say I pick this eighth floor and there is no need for the rest of the floors. Will this work? Absolutely not! This sequential order has to be understood.

[15B, 16:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P241, L3]

So, within the sequential order, which one is the root? It is the precepts – sila [Sanskrit], which applies to all Buddha Dharma, and this is the reason why I started by mentioning sila. Because of this, I will bring this up in every aspect when talking about precepts, because it is very easy to

misunderstand [the basic importance of Buddha Dharma], people will misunderstand it easily. Upon mentioning the precepts, [the reaction] is always: very well, hurry up and shave my head, take five precepts and ten novice monastic vows, and I will seek the Bodhisattva vows, don the robes and claim that I am one with the precepts! All of this is planting the seeds, which has great advantage and we praise it. Buddha Dharma is truly beautiful, absolutely don't belittle it, don't take what I just said above and despise it. That is totally wrong. We should absolutely respect it, however, we should comprehend the actual content. This is the husk of sugarcane. Without the husk, there would never be the molasses within. However, you should never swallow the husk and spit out the juice – this is our fault at the present stage, specifically be aware of this! Pay special attention to it! Later, in the section of the precepts, [we] will go over it in detail.

[15B, 17:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P241, L12]

Therefore, here, it can be briefly reviewed again. As for discipline, at least the teacher should be able to discipline himself. Upon facing a given condition, often we are able to speak of the theory, whereas everyone's affliction will arise when actually encountering the situation. May [I] ask, your study of Buddha Dharma is to tame the affliction and, if the teacher is filled with affliction, how can he give you guidance? In other words, if you encounter any situation and become very bothered, how can you teach others? Sure, I am able to make a lot of money here and have a high position; you have to listen to me because I am paying you. Otherwise, I will not pay you. Thus, others have to listen to you subserviently – is this the way it should be for monastics? No, we have to realize and understand the difference. So if

your business is well established, wow, people may think, what a great business establishment. From the aspect of planting the seeds of Buddha Dharma, we should praise this. However, as far as the breadth and depth of the actual content of Buddha Dharma, we have to distinguish very clearly. Thus, we should never randomly criticize others, but we still praise others' good qualities. However, personally, build from this foundation and advance step-by-step. Do not be fooled, never ravage yourself. So this is in regard to the "one-eighth."

[15B, 19:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P242, L7]

So why did the author say one-eighth instead of one-tenth? This is interesting, sorry, just having one qualification of precepts is not sufficient; in other words, once you abide by the precepts, there is still more to it. Actually, here you all have to recognize that it does not mean that, at the time you have perfected all precepts, you then enhance other qualifications to meet this [one-eighth requirement]. It is to say that, when engaging in anything, [all conditions have to] complement each other – your application of precepts increases gradually, it can be said that you are holding on to the fundamentals. For instance, for us to achieve total perfection one-eighth is the bare minimum; if we apply it mathematically, it is 12.5%. Thus, by then, you should have 4% of the precepts, 3% is knowledge from study, and a certain percentage of the others; achieve it by calculating this way. However, this is a fixed number. If we continue earnestly, eventually the understanding will naturally arise. As long as you are able to abide by the teaching, you will be very clear: oh, this is what the author is referring to by saying one-eighth. By the time you are able to tame your own afflictions, then you will understand. Taming afflictions

requires many qualifications, once you have experienced these qualifications, then you will be able to help others. So this refers to the [one-eighth] qualification of the teacher.

[15B, 20:34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P243, L3]

Now, for those of us practicing Buddha Dharma, this is kind of tough – a pretty difficult task – this is a matter of fact. If you don't have enough experience, this challenge is not easily identified, not easy to recognize it. Once you have some experience, you may say, why do I need a teacher? Regarding this question, we will discuss it in great detail later; I will just mention it briefly now. Strictly starting from the application, the aforementioned issue [one-eighth requirement] will not easily lead to breakthroughs. If you supplement with your study, then the difficulty will be eliminated. Why? Because after you study, although you are unable to achieve it, once you hear the key points – what does it mean by this? From study, if you are able to have wisdom arise from study, that will do. However, you studied but are unable to have wisdom arising from study, then it is of no help; that will not work out! So when the teacher talks about the true essence of Buddha Dharma, “certainly, the purpose of Buddha Dharma is to break through...and ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom are to identify the signs.” When the teacher is teaching, you will think, “Oh well, oh well! I now know the sign of attachment and the proper remedy for it.” You are able to identify it, once you have this recognition, you will have more or less some sort of experience, and then use it to distinguish the differences. If you don't have this experience, you will not be able to distinguish [the sign of attachment and so forth].

[15B, 21:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P243, L14]

I will use a very simple worldly case for everyone to understand right away. For instance, when we write characters, for someone who is totally illiterate, they will not be able to distinguish good [handwriting] from bad. If someone comes to write German or Russian, and you have no clue what Russian looks like, how can you tell if his writing is good or bad? You have no way of knowing. For the illiterate to write Chinese, he would not know what he is drawing. If you have learned it before, needless to say, for a calligrapher or college student, even for an elementary student, as long as you have learned and you take one look, you will be able to distinguish this word is pretty and that word is less perfect. However, you are not able to write calligraphy, right? Because you more or less have some understanding and experience, that is how it works. Thus, if you don't start by studying more, you will not have a complete understanding of the entire framework of Buddha Dharma. You will have only touched one part of it and had some vague concept; by then, you will have no way to distinguish. So from a different approach, provided you are able to start by studying, then you will have more or less some experience to be able to distinguish, and the challenges will not be there. The point is whether or not you have taken the correct path. If it is wrong, then the difficulty will arise.

[15B, 23:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P244, L10]

Just like too many of us, well, we have listened to a lot of great scriptures; or even teaching as a teacher – however, after all the teachings and listening, by the time of application, none of it can be useful. So, what should be

done at the time of practice? Very well, now we are done with the teaching, let's go do the prostration; or, very well, let's go chant Buddha's name – what was just taught is not applicable! Well, what was the purpose of the teaching just now? The key is right here. After listening, [we] all may say, "Wow, this [teaching] is excellent, remarkable!" Of course it is remarkable! But how are you going to advance? In case there is lack of a means in between, what is the use of this remarkable? All these aspects are the key issues! On the contrary, if you think that these [prostration or chanting] are useless, can you toss them away? That is not proper either. Continuing in this manner is completely empty talk and contention! Thus, [I] bring this up here on the side; recognize this representation of the one-eighth. Here, just mention the theory, and then we start from this point onward, and the rest [of the teaching sequence] will follow explicitly. After this explanation, you all must truly pay attention and thoroughly engage in it; by that time, you will come to understand the characteristics of [one eighth].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 24:41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P245, L5]

It is explained in Dol-wa's arrangement of *Bo-do-wa's Method of Explaining* that the great Elder [Atisha] said, "It is also the same with respect to the guru."

In Dol-wa's compilation of Bo-do-wa's quotations – these quotations were taught by his teacher Bo-do-wa – these teachings from Bo-do-wa were actually the collections of teacher's teacher Atisha. It says: Venerable Atisha passed down to Venerable Drom-don-ba and then to Bo-do-wa; and Bo-do-wa collected all the quotations. This text was not written by Bo-do-wa, he taught it and his student Dol-wa compiled all of Bo-do-wa's quotations of his own teachers.

“The great Elder” refers to Venerable Atisha. Venerable Atisha also specifically talked about the apparent sign of a virtuous teacher, which is stated above.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 25:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P245, L11]

Therefore, accept as the defining characteristics of a guru a minimum of one eighth of all the defining characteristics set forth here, combining those that are easy to acquire with those that are difficult to acquire.

This last statement explains the source of the lineage. Never overlook this statement. If you randomly glance over it, it is fine. However, for true practitioners, the lineage of the teachers is very important! Very critical! So the three spiritual sons of Drom-don-ba transmitted [the teachings] generation after generation all the way to Je Tsong-kha-pa. If we are serious about learning from this lineage, qualified teacher will let you know, that is how it works.

[15B, 26:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P246, L2]

So with our current understanding: well, the qualification of the teacher is such, so we are ready to find the teacher. Very sorry, not yet, first assess the personal conditions. What are the qualifications for the student? Before the actual teaching, first [I] have to specify: the student has to have these qualifications, then one is qualified to look for the teacher – a true virtuous teacher can be found, and then reliance should take place. Otherwise, you cannot find him; even if you are lucky enough to find one, it will not only do you no good, but may only bring you harm [if you are not prepared]. This we have to recognize.

[15B, 27:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P246, L7]

It is like playing with a priceless sword: for an experienced martial arts practitioner, it will be like putting wings on the tiger. However, if a child unfortunately picks it up, it can be terribly fatal! If no one is around him, he may just harm himself. If anyone is nearby, they might be hurt. Thus, when we are serious about learning the teaching, here the key is the [qualification of the] student. What I just said may not necessarily sound like a joke, maybe it is – in a more relaxed situation we may be able to recognize it. This applies to us in many situations, often, [we] say: “Sigh, many felt in the beginning that they were paying utmost respect to Buddha Dharma. Once ordained, many may be disappointed!” Why? That is because the priceless sword is left in the hands of a child, whoever is close by will be harmed. By that time, we have understood some teachings then apply them to find faults on you, him, or any others. Normally, your worldly standard is not too strict and everyone can get by sloppily; now, with this high standard to measure others, nobody can take it, just like that – actually, this is truly harming the self. So now, let’s take a look, what should our attitude as students be?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 28:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P247, L2]

b. The defining characteristics of the student who relies upon the teacher

This section explains the defining characteristics of the student. In other words, what is the required qualification for the student? Here is a quote from this commentary.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 28:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P247, L4]

Aryadeva states in his *Four Hundred Stanzas (Catuh-sataka)*:

It is said that one who is nonpartisan, intelligent, and diligent

Is a vessel for listening to the teachings.

The good qualities of the instructor do not appear otherwise

Nor do those of fellow listeners.

This will be explained later. In fact, this is referring to the three conditions for fully qualified practitioners: they are known as “non-partisan,” “intelligent,” and “diligent.” Once endowed with these qualifications, then the following good qualities will arise.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 29:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P247, L8]

Aryadeva says

This commentary explains the *Four Hundred Stanzas*:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 15B, 29:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P247, L10]

that one who is endowed with the three qualities

The one endowed with these three qualities are considered as “a vessel for listening to the teachings.”

is suitable to listen to the teachings.

[With these three qualifications of “non-partisan”, “intelligent,” and “diligent”] then one is suitable as a disciple to actually apply Buddha Dharma.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P75; 16A, 00:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P251, L3]

He also says that if you have all these qualities, the good qualities of one who instructs you in the teachings will appear as good qualities, not as faults. In addition, he says that to such a fully qualified person the good qualities of fellow listeners will appear as good qualities and not as faults.

Once you possess these three qualities, then you are able to identify all the good qualities of the teacher, you identify it and yes! These are the good qualities [of the teacher]. The next statement is very interesting – “not as faults”; you don’t see his faults. On the other hand, if you don’t have these qualifications, you will not be able to see teacher’s good qualities and, instead, just see his faults. We may doubt: “Is that so?” Yes! This is exactly what will happen, just like that. Perhaps at least we have already read the *Biography of Milarepa*, or maybe not. At least, last time we reviewed the stories of ancient Chinese Masters, like the one where three monks went to consult a virtuous teacher. They travelled far yet, upon arrival, the teacher shut the door and locked them outside overnight. The following morning, [the teacher] dumped a basin of cold water on them, splash! We might imagine, “What! This great teacher is such a cruel person!” Ah! Maybe you will not fight with him, at least you will share this with others by saying, “Ah! So this teacher has this attitude!” and defame him in every possible way. Well! It was not the case, that was [the good quality of] a true virtuous teacher!

[16A, 01:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P251, L3]

Often, we might come along and hear this, “Ah, so and so, you work too hard, very well! It is not easy for you to become a monastic! Well, now, in this place, everything is readily available to you. Well, this place of ours has many favorable conditions and, as long as you are here, it is very relaxing! If you please, you can go out to play or attend classes if you wish; otherwise, it is fine for you to take a nap.” “Very well, that is good! This place is great, very kind!” Later, if you go to another monastery where the restrictions are very rigid, you would be easily berated for nothing – this is wrong and that is incorrect. “Ah, what is wrong with these people, what is going on?” I believe it is very easy for us to comprehend, is that right? It doesn’t necessarily have to be pampering you in every aspect or, on the contrary, berating you is always good; no, not like that! We have to recognize why he pampers? And why does he berate you? If you recognize the reason with proper understanding, both being pampered and berated are acceptable. Otherwise, either way would be wrong; this is what we should understand. What is the recourse for you to understand him? It is at least you need to become endowed with the ability of knowing why he pampers or berates you. With this discernment, then it is right! So, next, the author says that you have to be endowed with these characteristics, by then you will be capable of telling the difference clearly, this is too important!

[16A, 03:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P253, L3]

We have to recognize that, from beginningless time, we are in the midst of contaminated emotion. After all, for the

most part, we are endowed with virtuous roots and, thus, willing to forsake worldly enjoyment to enter the Buddha door [as a monastic]. At least the recognition in our minds should be: what am I seeking here? Think it over, is this right? In the case of forsaking worldly things yet coming here still expecting good food, warm clothing, then why are you here? Thus, I am always indebted to my teacher back then, he usually would not yell, but sometimes he would! However, he often would say, “So and so! You come here with this attitude, are you being fair to yourself? Is this just the purpose for you to come here?” With just these two statements, [he] often would remind me and, up to now, I am still immensely benefited by it. This is why I have to specifically explain it. A true virtuous teacher’s good qualities or faults are not comprehensible! They cannot be seen! On the contrary, today he needs you here and, after [his] sweet talk, you stay – his motivation may not be good! Of course he may have the so-called “First inspire with the hook of yearning, then guide by wisdom of the Buddha” with such compassion. There are some [teachers] like that! Thus, I specifically explain this to you, and you have to recognize his true motivation and characteristic.

[16A, 04:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P253, L13]

Therefore, the concept above makes it especially valuable to read *The Biography of Milarepa*. Especially in the beginning, sigh, the teacher’s cruel attitude definitely cannot be found in our time now. Surprisingly, [this happened] in the Buddhist community, actually, [the teacher Marpa] is the most remarkable virtuous teacher. Here, let’s not envy Milarepa’s high achievement. He had so many virtuous teachers. Let’s think it over: if this story happened

to me, can I endure it? You should read this story carefully; would you be able to handle it? This is the author's fundamental reasoning, thus, here, it specifically explains the qualifications. What if the [student's] qualifications are lacking?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 05:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P254, L4]

It is stated in Candrakirti's commentary that if you, the listener, do not have all these defining characteristics of a suitable recipient of the teachings, then the influence of your own faults will cause even an extremely pure teacher who instructs you in the teachings to appear to have faults. Furthermore, you will consider the faults of one who explains the teachings to be good qualities.

In the case where you lack the qualifications – this is very important! So, here, the emphasis is specifically on the qualifications that we Buddha Dharma practitioners should have. In fact, the following teachings – if we are serious about learning them – is the study of finding out whether or not I am qualified. If not, hurry to strive at it; if we have sufficient qualities, then begin looking [for a teacher]. If you don't have the defining characteristics, although the teacher is "extremely pure" – which means absolutely encompassed – even like the Buddha, as perfect and thorough as Buddha, however, due to "the influence of your own faults, cause even an extremely pure teacher who instructs you in the teachings to appear to have faults." Because the listener – the student – has strong influence of personal faults, he is unable to see the teacher's good qualities and may even consider the teacher to be at fault. May I ask, if you see a teacher in error, would you be willing to rely on him? First of all, you may be unwilling – even if you were forced to stay

here and all you saw were his faults, would you be willing to abide by him?

[16A, 06:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P254, L14]

Hence, I often heard this in the past, what was it? “Well, if there are issues or something between teacher and disciple, just ignore the teacher. Leave him alone, and see what could he do? He just can’t do anything about you!” With this attitude, which is considered pretty good. Not yet turning against [the teacher], only having this [ignorant] attitude. So the question is, how are you going to learn from him? And how is he going to teach you? It would be considered not bad if there are no arguments! If this is the relationship between teacher and disciple, how can there be no conflict? The relationship between teacher and disciple is such, in an environment like this, would it be possible to teach others? So the ancient saying of “a loyal minister should be found from a well brought up family” has sound reasoning. If one can’t even take care of the family affairs and claims to be able to manage the state affairs or bringing peace to the world – it is totally impossible. The minister can apply some “scheme”; however, it is a means [to get things done]. To actually do things right, this [scheme] is not reliable. Such is the worldly example, needless to say about the Buddhist community. Thus, due to [my] personal fault and taking teacher’s good qualities as “appear to have faults.”

[16A, 08:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P255, L8]

On the other hand, it is interesting, the teacher is obviously at fault, the disciple mistakes that as good quality. Well, to the student, the mistake is considered good! Why?

Sigh, the teacher is very lenient – allows the disciple to do whatever – this is the reason, it is very clear and explicit. So, in many cases, well, this is a kind person – king of compassion – as long as you ask for money, he will give it to you; if you want to have fun, he will let you; and when you return to the monastery, he will always feed you. Sigh! Great sorrow, truly distressful! In the Buddhist community, we have to pay special attention on this.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 08:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P255, L13]

Therefore, although you might find a teacher who has all the defining characteristics, it may be difficult to recognize their presence. Thus, it is necessary for the disciple to have these three characteristics in their entirety in order to recognize that the teacher has all the defining characteristics and in order then to rely on that teacher.

Thus, [we] know that even the virtuous teacher is available – he is endowed with the perfect qualifications of a virtuous teacher – however, you may not realize that “it may be difficult to recognize their presence.” Why? Because you lack the ability to truthfully analyze. “To recognize that the teacher has all the defining characteristics and then to rely on that teacher.” In this case, if you try to understand the teacher, [you] must possess some qualifications. For those who already have this understanding while relying on the teacher, these qualifications become obligatory; thus, the [disciple] must possess these defining characteristics. So what are the characteristics? Let us take a break and continue with the discussion.

[16A, 09:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P256, L5]

The outline and framework were explained above. Thus, in this framework, those earnest Buddha Dharma practitioners must be endowed with these qualifications in order to find a virtuous teacher. And virtuous teachers are particularly indispensable in learning Buddha Dharma. Thus, all of these are the key points. The reason that we are not able to have achievement is [lack of understanding of] these key points. Now, even though we have heard about it here, actually, I believe that majority of us not only do not understand but also have never heard of “Ah! So, to study Buddha Dharma, [I] must have this requirement!” May [I] ask, if you don’t understand, how can you practice? It is just this simple. Like a simple worldly task, you say “I am thinking of becoming an engineer,” where do you learn it? And what do you learn? Totally clueless! Even with the aspiration, it will not work. Hence, the same applies to Buddha Dharma. Actually, there are more profound requirements, the basic idea is the same. So what are the three qualifications? Now let’s discuss them one by one. First is “nonpartisan”, please take a look at the text.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 11:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P256, L14]

With respect to these three characteristics, “nonpartisan” means not to take sides.

What is “nonpartisan”? It is a view from the negative side. “Not to take sides” this is like being trapped within – trapped in personal attachment. “Taking sides” means to have your own preference. But, in this context, it is the attachment to a particular religious sect. The fight between sects unites

those with the same views but alienates those with different views – be friends with the same view and reject all others. At the present time, I believe we are able to sense this. Although Mahayana and Hinayana are in conflict, Hinayana is further divided into 18 sub-divisions; actually, including two fundamental divisions, there are a total of 20 sub-divisions. Mahayana is divided into profound-view and extensive-deeds, Sutrayana and Tantrayana, tenet and Zen-meditation sects, as well as chanting Buddha's name. The tenet sect is further divided into three schools and the Zen meditation sect is further divided into five schools and seven sub-sects. Ah! It is totally fragmented. However, once you have a thorough understanding, it is definitely not fragmented. What is it instead? Very brilliant and resplendent, just like that. The key is right here.

[16A, 12:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P257, L9]

Just like a tree, if the root and trunk are healthy, and the boughs, branches, and then twigs, leaves, and flowers are dazzling and beautiful. If you are not able to grasp this principle, it all piles up together, ah! You absolutely don't know what to do. Thus, the issue is not to worry about the various differences; rather, it is the concern of your lack of skillfulness in utilizing them. So, with our present lack of understanding, [we] cling on to personal opinion that we think is correct and reject others.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 13:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P257, L13]

If you are partisan, you will be obstructed by your bias and will not recognize good qualities. Because of this, you will not discover the meaning of good teachings.

If, by distinguishing between the sects, you are “partisan” – that is, you are attached to it – because of your attachment, this preference could be an obscuration. For example, a common situation is chanting Buddha’s name, and discarding everything except for this Buddha’s name – no matter how many other good qualities there are, just leave it out! Zen meditators will not share with those of the tenet-sect and leave out all scripture study, just like this. Thus, [with this attitude] regardless of how you apply it, it is impossible to see the good qualities of others, and [you] just feel that others are wrong. If Buddha Dharma becomes like this, how can you talk about spreading the teachings! Since spreading it is not possible, the initial application is also unavailable. So eventually it turns out, that I think the most complete approach is chanting Buddha’s name. Certainly, if ten thousand people chant, ten thousand of them will achieve it. Unfortunately, you even do away with this [chanting] approach, tossing it away. To be honest, before learning the key to chant Buddha’s name, may [I] ask, how can you chant well with this [partisan] attitude? That is it. So one is unable to see the actual good qualities due to this kind of attachment – if the mind does not sense it, then the essence [of the teaching] will not be obtained. This essence is good and virtuous. Because you are unable to obtain it, you only see the teacher’s faults.

[16A, 14:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P258, L10]

However, the partisan attitude mentioned here refers to the segregation of schools and sects. At the present time, we could have yet another type, even though it is not part of any Buddhist schools or sects, it is actually happening. For instance, we are here to study. Otherwise, why come here?

Well, to “get-by” for a diploma, “get-by” for a couple of years! Why do I mention this word? Because my virtuous teacher berated me back then; I still have a very profound impression. Usually, people often say in this world – maybe it is not actually get-by, they are just trying to be modest – “Well, I am only getting-by here!” Just like this. Ah, human beings easily adapt negative tendencies. Although I rarely went out at that time, those few times [I did], sometimes I would hear this, well, being humble is pretty nice, so I would also say, “Alas! I am getting by as well.” Venerable Ren told me: “Well, how can you say this!” I felt that was being fairly modest, this [type of modest concept] is definitely wrong! Later, I understood, even if you are using a word, that word will imprint a bad seed in your mind.

[16A, 15:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P259, L4]

Thus, ancient scholars were very solemn; needless to mention the [ancient] monastics, even for laypeople, the ancient scholars said Confucius would “refrain from eating meat that is not cut into cubes.” Thus, as for other varieties of food, if it was cut slanted, Confucius would not eat it. Moreover, when ancient scholars wrote, the ink stick had to be ground very evenly, just like that. Hence, not knowing this when we were young, and sometimes the stick was lopsided. Upon returning home, father would chide [me]: “when writing, [everything] must be upright.” This morning, one fellow disciple came in, and I told him: when taking a book and opening it, we often do it randomly, let me demonstrate this to you now. Take this book for instance, you are very likely to open it carelessly and fold it here or there, anywhere.

[16A, 16:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P259, L11]

The way my father taught me was not like this. When receiving a new book, the first thing father would do was very precisely [press] along the seam of the binding. Take this book as an example, when anybody takes it, they will randomly [press] there, and leave a fold mark. You can see, on the cover of the book, the fold mark is slanted. Instead of doing this, when [I] was young, my father would always make a very gentle mark, or he would take a ruler and press it here, and then bend once here and once there. Examine it, if it is right, open the book on the desk and conscientiously press it one more time in the front and back. I have maintained this good habit to this day, you might want to take a look at my bookcase; if the book belongs to me, I always do this before I open the book for the first time.

[16A, 17:27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P260, L4]

Later, [I] found out, certainly the majority of those who study Buddha Dharma may say, “Well, meditation of Buddha Dharma is in your mind!” For everyone who does not understand Buddha Dharma, what is the “heart” in Buddha Dharma? Could it be the conventional heart made of flesh? Is it our conventional reference to the philosophical view of the duality of the physical and mental? The mind that Buddha Dharma refers to – there is no exception – talks about consciousness and how it arises. “The contact of the three” [faculties, external object, and consciousness], which cannot be separated from the external object, this is very clear and obvious. Therefore, we don’t understand Buddha Dharma and, usually, make this kind of absurd comment. It has its specific reason. Because of our lack of

understanding – thus, could it be possible that [I] responded prematurely, and jumped into it before hearing it clearly? This can also be called random speech, speak about what? It is to speak nonsense – this kind of flawed habit. Consequently, in this situation, great scholars would definitely be very sincere and abide by the standard.

[16A, 18:34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P260, L11]

Now, here our main focus is gradually to let go our grasping of partisanship. Thus, the phenomena mentioned above will appear. That is, to “get-by” and that was why Venerable Ren gave me that advice. Subsequently, the passing-byer is getting-by; even those are not passing-byers will be influenced to get-by. This is definitely happening! Your aspiration to advance is not easy and fill with hardship, yet, for you to downfall is extremely easy! I believe that everyone has this kind of experience? You are study earnestly here, and then you noticed several people near you are not studying. Gradually, you will think, well, forget it! Forget about studying! Just socialize with them. On top of that, others say, “Wow, so and so [you are] truly something, [you are] working to reach first place on the test! What do [you] need that for?” [You] will start to think, “Well, fine, be that way! Getting-by just like everyone else to make it easier.” Thus, from this aspect, although the ancient scholars swayed, but their swaying back and forth was still within [the standard]. Now, when we sway back and forth, we end up outside [of the scope of the teaching]. This is terrible, very dreadful!

[16A, 19:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P261 L6]

Since the purpose for you to come [to this Buddhist Academy] is just to get-by for a diploma; the requirement is to stay and study hard for a few years; yet you are prevented from doing this and that, moreover, you are told to do chores. [You might] think, “Sigh, if I stayed in my little temple, life would be much easier – food and clothing would be readily available – coming here, [I] have to endure all sorts of suffering!” If this diploma has a higher value, just suffer through it. I will just barely get by and that is it. Otherwise if the value of this diploma is not that high, then all is wasted! Hence, I specifically say this in a joking manner. In other words, to describe what should be in your minds – first let go of the preconceived notions, don’t bring it here, let it go. Never be influenced by those perceptions – once they influence you, what remains will ruin you!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 20:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P261 L13]

As Bhavaviveka states in his *Heart of the Middle Way (Madhyamaka-hridaya)*:

**Through taking sides the mind is distressed,
Whereby you will never know peace.**

Since you are submerged in this affliction of “taking sides,” it is attachment! Taking sides is attachment! Now it is not recommended to take sides, so is your attachment to non-Buddhist concepts acceptable? Becoming attached to the teaching will not bring peace. May [I] ask, with your attachment to immoral teaching, where will it lead if not downfall?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 21:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P262 L2]

“Taking sides” is to have attachment for your own religious system and hostility towards others’.

Here is the correct interpretation. This is because one takes sides, so he favors his own religious system, ah! Feeling very good about his religion. Now, the same applies to us, I believe we are very clear: every school considers what they have is better, and rejects others. Thus, for the sake of allowing more of our concordance, we have to apply this concept physically and mentally. This is very important, very crucial! So, we have to sincerely remove the attitude that lacks concordance within, and try to think of a way to purify it.

[16A, 21:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P262 L8]

Other than the above, although now that we are all from different background, the standard from my place is this, and he has his. Then you feel that he is wrong, and that it is incorrect. All of these mental attitudes should be removed. Although, after I came here, I also think highly [of the existing monastic standard] and, for the existing routines – basically all of the secondary ones – I will abide by the existing standard. If the custom is to offer water here, very well, water is offered. This should be done here, great, it will be done! Offering meal, sure, it is performed. Offer to another place, great! That is fine! As long as you grasp the fundamental, naturally, one thing comes after another. Some prefer to chant this tune, that is fine. Switch to another tune, well that is fine, as long as it is not immoral. First, we have to grasp the fundamental, these major concepts arise from here. Be mindful! Next it says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P 76;16A, 22:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P263 L2]

Look for it in your own mind and then discard it,

Now, with this understanding, what is next? Well, apply it to examine your mental stream immediately. Take a look, it [should be] very clear, and then do away with [the attachment]. Once it is discarded, the teaching will be planted in your mind and, by then, we will have hope [to advance], and this is the right thing to do. So:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 23:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P263 L6]

for it says in the *Bodhisattva Vows of Liberation (Bodhisattva-pratimoska)*:

After giving up your own assertions, respect and abide in the texts of the abbot and master.

Now, with this nonpartisan view, why is it needed? For [we] are inspired to study the teaching. Since study is required, if you are attached to your [pre-occupied perception], it won't work for you. Most peoples' attachments will cause arguments. Now you are inspired to learn from others, yet you come here and insist on doing it your way, how will it work? Of course it will not work! Therefore, especially with the Mahayana precepts, the Hinayana precepts may be a little relaxed. In other words, when entering [the monastery] you were told: "give up your own assertions." That is, remove your own way of thinking and aspirations, do away with it. Replace them with "respect" and "veneration." "Veneration" means to abide by it, abide by what? The Master's teachings are your tenets, the master you rely on often refer to as the "abbot." So abide by the abbot's rules and manner, this is appropriate and correct.

[16A, 24:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P264 L1]

Now I still remember, it was interesting, probably about twenty years ago, [I] went to a place and I felt, alas, it seems something is not right in this place. [I] always had [my] opinion. This is not right, that is wrong, it should be this or that way. At that time, I met a virtuous teacher, who came over to ask me, he said, “So and so, your opinion is pretty good, however, is your purpose to teach him or to learn from him?” I thought about it for a while, it was absolutely right. I am learning from him, yet I am making requests of him, isn’t this pretty absurd! It is quite inverted! So, with all these aspects, each one of them is worth our careful examination and reflection. And, here, what is the key? The key is still the perception – thus, changing a habit is easier, whereas changing the perception is harder. I see recently we have started [to work on transforming our perceptions], even though it is kind of messy, however, I noticed that the majority of you sitting here have done a very good job applying this stated teaching. Once this concept is recognized, the transformation will become easier. This is a very good sign, I just mention it on the side. Well, is abiding by it enough? Continuing.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 25:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P264 L11]

Question: Is just that one characteristic enough?

If this is the case, well, is having [one characteristic] enough? Not so! Why? Let’s continue to read.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16A, 25:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P264 L13]

***R/ly:* Though nonpartisan, if you do not have the mental force to distinguish between correct paths of good explanation and counterfeit paths of false explanation, you are not fit to listen to the teachings.**

If you lack the mental force to distinguish – this means analytical discernment – this is the ability to determine whether others are right or wrong. The right is referring to the “correct path” which is virtuous. The other one is a false explanation, that does not necessarily mean fight with you verbally, not so; it is seemingly right and known as the “counterfeit path” – sigh, the talk seems real, yet is false. For instance, too many of us like to say, “Ah! This *Diamond Sutra* is the best.” It is definitely the best, it teaches you to pierce the attachment. So we say, “Well, you don’t need to be stubborn! Why grasp on to it?” “That is right! No need to cling on to it, so why do you have to require attending the morning session on time? Anyhow, I couldn’t sleep at three in the morning, so it should be fine [to go to the prayhall]. And, when too sleepy, [getting up at] eight in the morning is fine, too, you don’t need to cling to it!” Do you think these comments make sense? Sigh, they sound kind of reasonable!

[16A, 26:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P265 L8]

I once met a fellow practitioner several years ago. He aspired to be ordained, but he later disrobed. Because he yearned to be ordained, after entering one monastic community and staying for awhile, alas! Who knows how many afflictions were caused. Later, before he left, what did he say? He said, “This [Buddha Dharma] is so wonderful, it is all about accomodation and freedom. However, after I came here, it is neither accomodating nor free. This is

required, that must be followed, this and that. Ah, in fact what kind of Buddha Dharma are you talking about!” Then, [he] left. At that time, I honestly did not know whether I should laugh or cry. What does Buddha Dharma teach us not to distinguish? It is very simple: under today’s most rigid [monastic] requirements, you remain stabilized, do not be disturbed by it. Thus, for a truly achieved Mahayana practitioner, he is not influenced when you praise him; he also is not impacted when you defame him; he is still unaffected when you offer him the best; if you take away all his offerings or even kill him, blow up his body and send it to the Avici hell, he will still remain as he is without moving. This is considered non-discrimination! This is the correct definition! Now, we are here, compromised by habits. In the best environment, do whatever you like, and believe that this is non-discrimination. What do you say about it? It is the talk that appears to be correct - “counterfeit paths of false explanation.”

[16A, 28:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P266 L4]

So this is why, earlier in the text, it tells us that Buddha Dharma relies on nothing but proper teaching from a qualified lineage. We now all rely on our individual intelligence, flip through several sutras and feel that we unmistakably understand it. And this happens to be the way we like it, too bad! Thus, you must distinguish it clearly, and this clarity is a must! If you don’t have this ability, it is not going to work, not possible! So, to apply the teaching sincerely, what is required? Precepts to tame your latent propensities and afflictions. Once the coarse ones are tamed, then study concentration. Furthermore, you profoundly analyze all worldly phenomena and eventually find out that the nature of all phenomena are nowhere to be found. Your usual attachments are mistaken, so, under this

condition, you are able to abide in the nature of emptiness without any external impact.

[16B, 00:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P267 L1]

If you only mind yourself alone this is Hinayana, and nothing in the world can shake or move you. If you are able to take a further step after this stabilization and allow the functioning of great efficacy to arise – this is the wisdom arising after equipoise that directly perceives the ultimate truth [see v.3 p.221 and p.258]. Thus you can proceed toward enlightenment. That is when you can do whatever you want, this is Mahayana. Then that is right! Whereas for our current state now, well, you think of doing whatever you like as liberation. If that is liberation, well, animals should be the most liberated – napping after eating, just like this. Although this statement may be a little exaggerated, I am doing it for the sake of our deeper understanding, just like that. Everyone think about it; is it right? Animals have very little discipline, lack reasoning, and have no need to follow rules. This we have to understand clearly.

[16B, 00:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P267 L8]

Thus, once [we] possess nonpartisanship, the next qualification is intelligence. Otherwise you follow him without attach to what is [proper] in your mind; then, you listen and follow him, just like that; in that case you are hopeless! Nonpartisanship is already very difficult, moreover, you do not possess intelligence, especially during this present time, where true virtuous teachers are not lacking, they are just rare and outnumbered by average beings. If you listen to

this person and follow him around, that is harmful – the blind leading the blind, and together they fall into the fire pit. What is the condition of our normal state? It is like “one dog barking at a shadow, and hundreds of dogs barking at the noise.” Often, at night we hear dogs barking, one sees a shadow, well, starts to bark; all the other dogs follow and bark together. It sounds like there is much commotion. Actually, what kind of shadow is this? It is the wind blowing through the swing grass! You can’t claim that there is no influence, yet it is totally irrelevant. This is what the text refers to as “counterfeit paths”, we have to recognize this clearly – this is required. And then we will have the opportunity not to live wastefully.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16B, 02:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P268 L8]

Therefore, you must have the intelligence that understands both of these. By this account you will give up what is unproductive, and then adopt what is productive.

By then, you will understand that the teaching being given is right, wrong, virtuous or non-virtuous, and what your direction should be. At this time, you will be able to forsake what is unproductive and false, and you will be able to uphold what is accurate. Will this be enough? Well, it is still not enough!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16B, 02:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P268 L12]

Question: Are just these two enough?

***Reply:* Though having both of these, if, like a drawing of a person who is listening to the teachings, you are inactive, you are not fit to listen to the teachings.**

Just these two [nonpartisanship and intelligence] are still not enough, for us to be endowed with just one of them would be pretty difficult, what about both of them? Ah! However, that is still not enough. This is similar to a person listening to the teaching in a drawing. Why is it called a drawing? If the person in the drawing is lifelike, it still would not function, right! What is the characteristic of a human? Each [one of us] has personal preferences and aspirations. Without this preference or aspiration, even with the Buddha Dharma being great, you are explaining to a picture on the wall. However great an explanation it is, after he listens to the teaching, it will have no impact. There is a frequently heard ancient statement, “there must be blood underneath the skin.” When I first heard this, I had no idea what it meant. Why mention blood underneath the skin for no reason? What does it mean when we refer to a person with blood underneath the skin? This must apply to a living person, after you pierce a dead person, there would be no blood. Why? His mind is inactive like a log; that is what it means. What are we humans now? Once non-virtue is recognized, refrain from it immediately; if it is good, engage in it right away. Thus, this mental strength is required. The third characteristic:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16B, 04:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P269 L9]

Therefore, you must have great diligence.

Furthermore, aspiration is required and it must be vast. What does this mean here? As for the peerless great

teachings: with little aspiration, the effect is little as well, whereas with great aspiration, the effect is comparably great. These are nonpartisanship, intelligence, and diligence.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P76; 16B, 04:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P269 L13]

Candrakirti’s commentary says, “After adding the three qualities of the student to the two qualities of being focused and having respect for the teaching and its instructor,

Therefore, in the explanation of *Four Hundred Stanzas*, not only were these three characteristics mentioned, it also included “respecting the teaching and its instructor” and “being focused.” Focus is to concentrate with mindfulness.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 04:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P270 L2]

there are a total of five qualities.”

Why did the author not mention these [five qualities] earlier, and instead only stated three and is now following up with more? We must understand ancient scholars have very sharp faculties. For those with sharp faculties seeking teachers, many of them were endowed with much preconditioned potential and, thus, [distinguishing either the five or three qualities is] not required. This is the reason. For example, those who have travelled afar to search for teachers, once something is gained, how could they not pay respect! They usually would not [be disrespectful]. Once there is some obtainment, [they] would never set it aside in a relaxed manner, never. Ah! He would completely focus with full attention and do nothing but that, just like this.

Nowadays, often, too many people wish to make it easier for others – I also praise and rejoice the act. However, I don't agree with many of the approaches of making it easier; truthfully, in these aspects, I disagree.

[16B, 05:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P270 L10]

I have often heard the attitude of ancient scholars – in *A Casual Talk of a Dream*, the author eventually found the elder abbot and asked to be ordained. And then people around him praised, “Ah! What a remarkable person.” And [they] said, “If he is ordained, I will make an offering to cover the cost of his robes and food.” It was due to the aspiration [of this monk to be]! For ancient practitioners, when someone is about to be ordained, people around him would immediately be inspired to make an offer. What did this elder abbot reply? “No, you are letting him reap what he has not sown, that is not allowed, let him go out for an alms round.” If it were us, just imagine – would you not support the newly ordained monk? Hence, all of you should read the biographies of ancient practitioners carefully; they are all like that. Nowadays, everything comes to you so easily – delivered to you and there is no appreciation for it. With a true Dharma vessel, you should not give him anything, and he would be able to advance; on the contrary, when you give him everything, that may be harming him. This is what I perceived sincerely; however, I will not emphasize it – like those habits that we have already formed – it is not necessary for you to torment him excessively. However, when things are too convenient, being too lax in skillful means will lead to downfall.

[16B, 06:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P271 L5]

I always have this impression of the study trip to India the year before; in fact, I was nearly sixty years old. However, once I heard the teaching, I just could not help myself [the attitude of wanting to learn]! Well! [I] went there twice. As for India, maybe some of you in the audience have been there before, if you go with a group, it is hard to get a sense for it; yet if one goes alone, India is actually rugged everywhere and Indians are difficult to deal with! I went there all by myself; I remember the last time I was there was interesting. I thought I had already being there twice and was quite familiar with the area. So, I knew about how they trick you. Usually they trick you with all sorts of schemes. Once you land and enter [the country], [when you] leave [the airport], the government-owned taxi drivers approach immediately. First [you] need to get a ticket – they were part of the government services! Usually the charge is very little, whereas the government services added a lot [of charges]. However, you have no choice but to let them top up. Moreover, the cab driver stops you, “Well, are you looking for a hotel?” Just like that. Certainly, he would force you to stay at the most expensive one so he would be able to have a share of the profit!

[16B, 08:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P271 L15]

Since I was there before and knew about this, so I said, “I don’t need your help, I can find my way.” “Just name it, which one do you want?” He said the hotels there needed to be reserved in advance. Unbeknownst to me, he already made phone calls for me. The lines were busy here and there and all the rooms were taken – in fact, they were not full. Later, I realized there was no other way, so then I looked for a cab and so on. At that point, you had no other choice but to bow your head underneath the roof of others. Just accept it, take it as is with no alternative! That was it. I

knew an actually decent hotel – one of the best ones that only charged eighty rupees a day. Later, after he tried very hard and found one for four hundred fifty rupees, and he claimed that was because he called in a favor. So, I had no choice! Well, that was fine! [I] took it. And then, he managed to get a car, sigh, it was an old clunker.

[16B, 08:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P272 L8]

Well! Before I went there, people said that there was a group of Indians, that is to say, there was this very strange religion. They kill people, and the approach to killing people was different from ours. It was a kind of religious concept. How did they do it? If you happened to be there, they would treat you very well and then, once you began to trust them, they would kill you and distribute your money and clothing, and even eat your flesh. This is how they handled things! Just like that. So I had read this kind of story before and thought about it. That night, as I sat in a car – the flights in India are all scheduled at midnight – the driver drove around in the desolate area. Suddenly, the thought popped into my mind: alas! What if [we] run into the head of that sect, then [I] would be done for! This time, I carried a lot of money in my luggage to offer to the teachers as a tribute for seeking the teachings. Thus, that entire night passed with such torment. Alas! It is hard for you to imagine how much trouble this was – upon arriving in their territory, there is nothing you can do about it, and can only be swindled by them.

[16B, 09:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P273 L2]

Finally, the next day, [I] arrived at the train station and I was able to find [the hotel I had in mind]. However, I had luggage. So I called a taxi. The taxi driver asked where to go. I named the place. “Well! No.” “Why not?” He replied, “Curfew.” Can you believe this? Of course he could tell right

away that you were a foreigner. India was in chaos at that time, who knows if there actually was a curfew. Later, I reflected, why was it that they picked on you? That was their way. For instance, say that [a driver brought] you to a certain hotel, and this place was very expensive. When [the driver] brings you there, he would have a share of the cost. That was how it worked! It would make you very confused. When looking for transportation, there were train and bus stations. Actually, the distance by car was not far, maybe about five hundred kilometers. This distance for us here is equivalent to the distance from Taipei to Kaohsiung – approximately five to six hours away or, at the longest, seven or eight hours would be sufficient. As a result, about five hundred kilometers took fourteen hours. What were the road conditions like? It was very poor and dusty so on and so forth..... [I] endured all that suffering.

[16B, 11.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P273 L12]

To compare with the ancients, well! This was heavenly. For two hours, maybe not even two hours, just a few hours on a flight from Hong Kong would take you to India very quickly. If it were like before, from Hong Kong to India would take a few years at least! Moreover, in snowy and icy weather like Venerable Xuan-zang [the Tang Dynasty high Monk, traveled across land from China to India], or even like Venerable Fa-xian [he went to Tibet from China about 100 years ago over high mountains] – many went on the trip yet the majority of them froze to death. Sigh! The airline provides everything – there are towels and meals for you. Yet, [we] still feel that it is difficult to bear, just like that. However, just because of this [hardship] upon reaching that place, you will be filled with more sincerity.

[16B, 12:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P274 L2]

Upon arriving there, I told you before, it was very windy outside and breezy inside. Moreover, it was pouring outside and dripping inside. However, we wouldn't complain about this or that; everyone concentrated with their full attention; if there was a leak, just move away from it. As for us now, we probably would pout – during summer, the fan is not good enough; in the winter, if it is too windy, it is not good, poor air quality is not good either – who knows what is constantly tumbling in the mind. Here, I just bring it up in passing. The reason that I generally do not approve is: if you provide everything [to our monastics], serve them food yet there will still be complaints. Sigh! Even if we feed you the food, you lack an appetite. It would be great if I added some chili or soy sauce, just with this attitude!

[16B, 12:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P274 L9]

Here, I am not trying to overly exaggerate this kind of joke or to overly stimulate you folks. I just want to say that, because this is our normal habit, I applied an emphasis in my tone in the hopes that everyone would pay special attention here. This is something I am careful about and have no other choice, please do excuse me. Hence, what is required for us here? [We] must have “great diligence.” Diligence in what? Diligence in the teaching; without this attitude, naturally, you will not be able to let go of this or that, just like that. We include this “respect for the teachings” and “being focused” to make it five. Among these five, it can be summarized in four items.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 13:41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P275 L1]

Then, these five qualities can be reduced to four:

Which four?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 13:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P275 L3]

(1) striving very diligently at the teaching,
This is the first.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 13:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P275 L5]

(2) focusing the mind well when listening to the teaching,

“Focusing the mind well” is a nonpartisan, focused mind. Moreover,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 13:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P275 L7]

(3) having great respect for the teaching and its instructor, and

This is the third, lastly,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 14:00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P275 L9]

(4) discarding bad explanations and retaining good explanations.

This is being intelligent. Once you are endowed with the wisdom to differentiate virtue and non-virtue, then you will be able to eliminate the erroneous “bad explanations.” This is then followed by absorbing proper “good explanations.” Here, among these four,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 14:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P275 L12]

Having intelligence is the favorable condition that gives rise to these four. Being nonpartisan gets rid of the unfavorable condition of taking sides.

Among them, one is the unfavorable condition and the other is the favorable condition. Often our study of Buddha Dharma will have obstacles – obstructions that have not yet been removed, and merits that have not yet been accumulated. Obstacles are the unfavorable conditions mentioned above. The reason that we are unable to enter the Buddha Dharma realm is due to our weighty attachments. Nonpartisan... this can be considered as latent propensity. Thus, once this is removed, with one step closer, [be careful not to become] one who lacks the ability to distinguish right from wrong.

[16B, 14:56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P276 L5]

Please turn to [page 77] of the Lamrim text. In it, we have already briefly introduced a few things such as how to correspond to this laudable teaching – how we should listen and explain. Thus, everyone should keep in mind that, during the course of our actual practice, progression must be step-by-step from the foundation. Now, at the beginning of our listening to one concept, we should strive to comply with the teaching to deepen our understanding with each step. However much your concordance is, you will benefit accordingly and receive comparable advantage. At the same time, for those of us unable to fathom this immediately, have this proper concept established in mind: this teaching in front of us will be the foundation for future learning. In

other words, while we are advancing step by step, it must be based on the previous content.

[16B, 16:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P276 L12]

So there is some difference from worldly academic knowledge – for worldly knowledge, you hear it and that is it. Later, when it is useful, going back to refer to it, that is how it works – it is just some reference material. Whereas our study of Buddha Dharma is different – we advance step by step, and you must have the foundation to advance. You will never be apart from the foundation, never. Thus, for instance, we are climbing upstairs one level at a time. By the time I am up to the third floor, it does not mean the rest of the stories are not needed. The lower floors have to be there; the higher you go, every lower floor is underneath you – that is how you ascend. Therefore, we study Buddha Dharma, take heed! When advancing gradually, the content that came before must be slowly accumulated – accumulated gradually. At that time, you are actually advancing. In other words, you are in the middle of progressing and benefiting from the application of Buddha Dharma; we have to be very clear on this concept. We may not be able to achieve it at once, but we must strive to apply accordingly from the beginning, and abide by it. By doing so, gradually and gradually understand more, and the hope of applying Buddha Dharma is promising. This is also the proper attitude of learning Buddha Dharma.

[16B, 18:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P277 L8]

Now, let us continue on [page 77 of the text]. The required qualifications for the students are: nonpartisan, great diligence, intelligence, and, on top of that, respect. The author divided these four into favorable and unfavorable

conditions. If it is an unfavorable condition, in other words, it is an obstacle. If this obstacle is not cleared, you will never be able to enter [the teachings]. It is like our wish to enter a door – now the entrance is blocked, you will never be able to enter. This is considered an unfavorable condition – it should be removed. Once inside, you have such a choice – what is right or wrong – this is considered a favorable condition. If the favorable condition is insufficient, although you have entered, you may not necessarily get the good things. If you end up taking the bad things, then the effort would be wasted, this we should understand. Thus, with this understanding, we should examine our current status. Let's continue with the text.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 19:56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P278 L1]

Investigate whether these attributes that make you suitable to be led by a guru are complete;

The above stated characteristics, once endowed, the significance is there to generate correspondence. Correspond to what? It is to truly correspond with virtuous teachers, and then the guidance from the teachers can be taken; then, [one is] considered capable [of being a suitable disciple]. For example, like we have a very good school now, it depends on whether you are qualified to be admitted there. It is the same situation now; we often claim that we lack a qualified teacher or meditation center. To this point, we should reflect thoroughly on the proper recognition of whether we are actually lacking a virtuous teacher? No, there are [qualified teachers]! It is our inability to abide by and accept the virtuous teacher. Since you lack the preconditions and, thus, the qualities of the virtuous are not visible to you, you mistake positive as negative and vice

versa. In this situation, you will never have the opportunity, this is what happens! Once there is this recognition, this is the time to apply the qualifications to measure ourselves, to assess if [I] am endowed with these characteristics.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 21:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P278 L10]

If they are complete, cultivate delight.

Well! Please pay attention to the “cultivate” in this statement. Upon attaining recognition and applying contemplation physically and mentally, when analyzing whether or not you are doing it right – [you will be] endowed with the qualifications described herein, you will have completed the above attributes, and that is the time to be joyful and delight. Notice that it also includes the word “cultivate.” This word is very important! Well! Why is it described as “cultivate” delight? Of course! Most of the time, our minds are in an average state of beginningless ignorance and, thus, the force of mental momentum and behavior and so forth are in concordance with confused karmic deeds. Therefore, the deeds of ignorance will make you cycle within it continuously. How can these ignorant contaminated karmic deeds be reversed? That is the time when we have to cultivate. When we claim to cultivate meditation, this is it. But how should it be done? This will be discussed in detail later.

[16B, 23:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P279 L5]

Now, with what was said above, that is, upon your endowment, you should feel joyful and fortunate, and rejoice yourself. “Ah, well done! Surprisingly, I made it!” The joyful feeling remains in the mind. This kind of self-rejoicing is the

best cultivation. So let's reflect on the *Ten Great Aspirations* [also known as the seven branches of worship of the Bodhisattva of Great Deeds Samantabhadra], one of them is the good qualities of rejoicing, what is rejoicing? This merit is a positive quality – a good deed. Although you are not engaging in it, however, because these are good qualities, you gladly rejoice. This good quality does not only apply to [the one who has achieved it] – it is to rejoice in others' and our own good qualities. Because of the praise and delight within and rejoicing accordingly, this is when we are cultivating – this is the best way to increase our merits. Some of these concepts were introduced before, which included the disadvantages. By rejoicing in this manner, your mental stream is aligned with the Dharma; this is the first [benefit of rejoicing].

[16B, 25:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P279 L14]

The second [benefit] is, because you rejoiced in such a manner, not only will the power arise, but it will continuously increase. Just like us, when we are in a group and making decisions through voting, some agree whereas others disagree. If you would like to see [the decision] pass, it is better to have more approval. For the same reason, in each one of our minds and mental streams, if [we] don't cultivate this, then our mental streams correspond with ignorance; they are aligned with ignorance. In other words, when you are not rejoicing, that is the time you are voting against it; what does this veto mean? It is the objection of your rebirth to the deity realm and escape from cyclic existence, and it goes against your wish to be reborn to Pure Land. Unknowingly, you are in the midst of a downward spiral. It is that serious, yet it can also be managed beautifully. Thus this is the actual meaning of the word "cultivate."

[16B, 26:27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P280 L7]

So I will not specify when the discussion will be in the future, otherwise I will keep on saying later, later and you will ask, when will that later be? When the karma section is discussed, this will be the most important discussion. Hence, you all need to review it frequently. Just listening to it has a very minimal effect. You all must read ahead of time, and then follow that by listening. After that, continuously analyze and contemplate. That will be the time when you can absorb [the teaching] thoroughly and become able to fathom Buddha Dharma with a more profound comprehension. I just bring it up briefly; otherwise, you will feel a lack of connection, and be unable to link [the teachings] together. Thus, with this ability, this is the attitude we should have. What if this ability is lacking?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 21:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P278 L10]

If they are incomplete, you must make an effort to obtain the causes that will complete them before your next life.

Now, we lack the ability, so we have to think and practice by saying, “I want to learn Buddha Dharma; since this is required, I should strive at it now. Otherwise, the opportunity will be gone.” So if you are able to work hard at planting the cause, upon fulfilling the causes and conditions, the achievement will arise in the future. Therefore, the hard work now leads to the perfected effect in the future – this will arise from your diligent effort! So, here, the concept is very clear – those with incomplete [abilities] should practice in this way, and those with complete [abilities] should have another approach. With this understanding, regardless of

whether [you are] complete or incomplete, you are always abiding by the teachings to advance step by step. For those of us Buddha Dharma practitioners, the key is whether you are progressing according to the teachings. This is the most important and we must grasp it.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 16B, 28:37; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P281 L6]

Therefore, know the qualities of a listener. If you do not know their defining characteristics, you will not engage in an investigation to see whether they are complete, and will thereby ruin your great purpose.

So here, one concept that should be understood is: what are the qualifications for relying on a virtuous teacher? If we do not understand this – unaware of it yet still consider myself as a practitioner – why is the correspondence not there even after practicing for some time? This is why. You do not even know how to cultivate, how can you meditate? We often use the description of practicing blindly and meditating aimlessly – applying the teaching without knowing how. Ironically, we are the ones practicing blindly and meditating aimlessly yet we are not aware of it.

[17A, 00:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P3 L1]

Even after understanding, yet there has not been any improvement, may [I] ask: how can [we] cultivate? So this we have to recognize, and then there will be a standard to measure ourselves by. Please note that it does not mean you have the understanding, “Ah, got it, got it!” With this understanding, take this opportunity to work at it – the

purpose for our understanding is to improve – it would be such a pity if you know it but are not applying it.

[17A, 00:42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P3 L5]

So here, in this section, it tells us that if we have not yet reached this understanding, or even if we understand but are not practicing it and are still abiding by old habits instead of recognizing the proper attitude – right from wrong and correct from incorrect. In this circumstance, we have unknowingly lost great advantage: what is not achieved will not be obtained; and the already attained will be lost. That is truly a regrettable thing. So now, with this understanding, take one step further from the previously mentioned qualifications of teacher and student. Now, how should these conditions be used to complement the teaching and learning? Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 01:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P4 L2]

c. How the student relies upon the teacher

At this time, how should a student rely on a teacher? See below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 01:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P4 L4]

One who has these qualifications of a suitable recipient of the teachings should investigate well whether a guru has the requisite characteristics as explained above. Then this student should receive the teaching's kind words from a qualified teacher.

So, next it tells us first to analyze the self: are these qualifications present? If one is endowed with these qualifications, one should be delighted. Otherwise, strive at it right away. Thus, the primary importance is to enable the self to become a suitable recipient of Buddha Dharma. For this, I have reminded all of you time and again to keep this in mind: we should never say things like this, sigh! “Well, looking around this world, there are none who are qualified!” This is completely wrong, totally mistaken! Completely wrong, how wrong can it be! We should quietly introspect to verify whether I am a suitable recipient of Buddha Dharma; this is a required quality. If you are unable to have this quality, even if you are in the Buddha realm, there is only one path for you – miserable realms. This is very important.

[17A, 03:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P4 L11]

With the above, the next step is to take the time to skillfully and sincerely analyze the requisite characteristic of the virtuous teacher you are relying on – whether [the teacher] possesses the aforementioned qualifications. This systematic order is very clear and obvious. If we lack this understanding and do not abide by this sequential step, the flaws are absolutely great and it is a grave danger. If you do not have the qualifications yet take our worldly standard to measure the teacher, this would definitely be flawed. Because what is the worldly requirement? It is to concord with attachment, hostility, and ignorance. The truly qualified Buddha Dharma teacher is there to help you purify attachment, hostility and ignorance [the three mental poisons] – it has to be like this. These two [worldly and Buddha Dharma approaches] are totally mismatched, totally off. If you base your search for an excellent teacher on attachment, hostility, and ignorance, it would be a fruitless approach – the distance will become greater. This is why

the systematic order is arranged this way, [we] must pay attention to it, be aware of it.

[17A, 04:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P5 L6]

Thus, upon our reading of great teachers' biographies and so forth, they are all alike – they manifested to dampen your enthusiasm like a splash of cold water. What is the cause? There are many special reasons, which we will not go into detail here – just with the hope that everyone will study earnestly. Then, once we are endowed with these qualifications and we have found a suitable guru to rely on, then, at that time, you want to follow and receive the Buddha Dharma from him – properly apply the teaching with diligence. Now, this lineage is further telling us that there are two different approaches.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 05:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P5 L11]

Even so, the biographies of Geshe Drom-don-ba and Sung-pu-wa (gSung-phu-ba) are not in accord with each other.

These two teachers had different approaches; they were from different lineages and had different content. Which of the two should be applied – let's look at it.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 05:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P5 L14]

Sung-pu-wa had many gurus and listened to any correct explanation. Thus, when coming from Kham (Khams), he even listened to a lay practitioner explaining the teachings alongside the road. His disciples said that

this was an inappropriate way to receive the teachings, to which he replied, “Do not say that. I have received two benefits.”

So of these two teachers, first let’s talk about the latter – Sung-pu-wa. His virtuous teachers, wow! The numbers were many and diverse. Many referred to quantity and diverse regarding the variety in representation – all sorts of virtuous teachers. Whenever there was a teaching, he would attend and listen to it. There was even one example: one time he came from Kham actually it was West Kham and proceeded toward Tibet. About halfway there, he came across a lay practitioner giving a Dharma talk, so he joined and listened. Thus, his disciple said, “Well, Master! This is an average lay practitioner, yet you are such a great Dharma Master, how could you listen to him!” What was Sung-pu-wa’s answer? “Well, you don’t say this, I have received two benefits!” Such a great virtuous teacher – if Sung-pu-wa were compared with either contemporary or great teachers in our Chinese history, who is he equivalent to? [He] could be comparable to Zhao-zhou (趙州) or Huang-bo (黃檗), those great Zen Masters. Sung-pu-wa was a remarkable teacher from Venerable Atisha’s lineage. We can imagine his achievement. He had many disciples in the Kang area and had a great monastery – such a teacher. However, when an average lay practitioner gave a teaching, he went to listen with great respect. This point is of great importance to us – an extreme reminder, absolutely great! So this is one type, and the other...

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 07:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P7 L1]

Geshe Drom-don-ba had few gurus not more than five.

Drom-don-ba had many fewer – he did not have too many virtuous teachers. In total, [he] probably did not even have five of them. Well, between these two types, which one is better? Next, it tells us.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 08:01; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P7 L4]

Bo-do-wa and Gom-ba-rin-chen, themselves gurus, discussed which of these two ways was better.

[They] said: “Which of the two is better [Drom-don-ba or Sung-pu-wa]?” So the reply follows.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 08:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P7 L6]

They agreed that Geshe Drom-don-ba’s way was better in these times when those with untrained minds still see faults in the teacher and lose faith. What they have said seems to be very true. Therefore, you should have few teachers.

There is a qualification, what is it? One has to go through a period of practice first – how should we practice? Later, the author will tell us the importance of relying on virtuous teachers and various skillful means. Once you have this practice, when seeing others, you will only see their good qualities instead of their faults, and will not look at their flaws. So let’s review the story of the Sadaparibhuta Bodhisattva [常不輕菩薩 Never Disparaging Bodhisattva] in the *Lotus Sutra*. When seeing anyone, he greeted them with: “Ah! You all will achieve Buddhahood, I will never belittle you.” Anyone he encountered, he thought of them as future Buddhas, that is the sign of [someone who has] already

applied the teaching to practice. Before our application in the given situation, we will constantly find faults in others; thus, comparatively speaking, to mimic Venerable Drom-don-ba is better – follow the latter.

[17A, 09:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P8 L2]

However, here, we have to be aware of one thing. Consider that there are two lineages and we follow the latter, thus, [we] just look for a few excellent teachers with some effort, and that will do. For the remaining instructors, you constantly find their faults. This is wrong; we have to try to do away with this concept. Think, what is the true meaning of this? It means that if this [disciple] already studied sincerely, naturally, [the achievement will arise]. What about us now? [We] lack cultivation. Do you want to advance? Of course we do. If that is the case, never be self-destructive. So the preceding text told us those great teachers they all set their views to emulate those accomplished ones, they look upward. This type of person is not worried of being inferior, what is concerning is depravity and, once there is depravity, it is of no help. “Anyway I am just like this!” This is an irresponsible attitude; thus, no one can help us. In this situation, we are certain not to have cultivated anything, thus [we] should follow the latter approach. However, we should feel embarrassed and have deep regret! Our qualifications are too inferior! Thus, this is the only approach. Then, strive to advance forward – this is the appropriate attitude we should have.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P77; 17A, 10:56; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P8 L12]

In general, a teacher is someone from whom you have received the teaching’s kind words, specifically, a

teacher is someone who skillfully guides you with the instructions of all the paths in their entirety.

Great, now the actual concept of relying on the teacher will be discussed next. Speaking of the benevolence of Buddha Dharma, ah! It is remarkable and extraordinary! This benefit is so great – all of our mundane and supramundane goodness arises from Buddha Dharma. For both mindfulness and appreciation, we need to repeatedly keep them in mind to experience and recognize them, to feel and identify them. Even for minor tasks, we often think, “What do I owe him? Nonetheless, I presented this [offering] to him!” This concept is really unfavorable, very poor! Of course, when applying average worldly perception or standard, you pay for it or even say, “This is the way I am, what can he do about me? There is just nothing he can do to me.” Honestly speaking, this attitude is totally harming you. Once you know how to appreciate others’ kindness and the actual benefit in the end, well! How ingenious! [The benefit] is yours; it will all come back to you.

[17A, 12:17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P9 L7]

For this, you all need to experience it carefully. For however much you are able to appreciate it, you will receive comparable benefit. We do not need to get too profound, for the shallow ones, you now say: “This was bought with my money – I do it this way and he can’t do anything about me.” What kind of attitude is this? This mentality is basically affliction. We now study Buddha Dharma to purify [our] afflictions. However, [we] still find all kinds of excuses to support [our own] logic. Before we discuss anything else, the mental momentum is already way off. So what does

[mental purification] rely on? Our purification entirely relies on the guidance of a virtuous teacher. For the detailed content, you all can carefully work on experiencing and analyzing it.

[17A, 13:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P9 L14]

So what is specific here? It is the entire guidance from a skillful teacher. These “instructions of all the paths in their entirety” should not be overlooked. We know the content of the “instructions” as the actual key essence – the primary guidance for application. Also, here it refers to the complete [content] – the guidance from such an excellent teacher is extremely important for us. The true practitioner’s success or failure in cultivation completely relies on this. Once you have [such a teacher], there is no need to worry. Otherwise, regardless of how erudite you are, you are still fallible. So how do [we] rely on the teachings? It is divided into two parts: the thought, which is conceptual and mental; and the performance, which is the reflected behavior based on the mental attitude. Thus:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 14:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P10 L5]

1.) How to rely in thought 2.) How to rely in practice

These are the two divisions within it.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 14:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P10 L7]

How to rely on the teacher in thought is explained in three parts:

Conceptually, it is divided into three parts.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 14:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P10 L9]

- 1. A general indication of the attitudes needed to rely on the teacher**
- 2. In particular, training in faith, the root**
- 3. Remembering the teacher's kindness and being respectful**

There are three parts. The thought is to first understand the primary concept of relying on a virtuous teacher; we need to understand the entire content in general. Then, secondly, especially in this section, what is the first attitude toward a virtuous teacher? It is to cultivate faith, which is our foundation. Thirdly, be mindful of teacher's kindness and pay respect. The order is like this. Let's continue with the text.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 15:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P11 L3]

a) A general indication of the attitudes needed to rely on the teacher

First is the discussion of the general concept of relying on the teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 15:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P11 L5]

The Array of Stalks Sutra (Ganda-vyuha-sutra) states that you should respect and serve the teacher with nine attitudes. This includes the key points of all the

attitudes that you should have in order to rely on the teacher.

This is quoted from *the Array of Stalks Sutra*. At the same time, we are able to recognize the certainty for us to receive the most complete instructions from here. Therefore *the Array of Stalks Sutra* is definitely the most encompassing and inclusive one from Buddha's time. And these nine attitudes already include all the key points on how to rely on and serve the teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 15:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P11 L10]

If these are further condensed, four attitudes remain. They are as follows:

These nine attitudes can be categorized into four groups; now let's go over them one by one. The first group:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 16:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P11 L12]

1) *The attitude which is like the dutiful child.* This means to give up your independence and submit to the guru's will.

The first one is to give up personal independence. What is independence? It is whatever I feel like doing or whatever I want to do – these have to be removed. How [do we] do it? Rely on your virtuous teacher for everything – whatever he wants to do, you follow it accordingly and accept the compromise. Just like what? Just like a dutiful child – a worldly, obedient child. Of course, [you do] not necessarily

have to be a dutiful child, it is used [as an example] of the attitude that we should relate to and abide by.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 16:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P12 L5]

Dutiful children do not initiate an action on their own, but instead, looking at their parents' facial expressions, submit to their will and then do what they say.

What would a dutiful child normally do? He would not say I would do it this way or I want to do this. Not like that, he would first observe and understand his father's wishes, his father's preferences or dislikes; he would diligently fulfill his father's aspirations and abide by his father's guidance to accomplish it. So the primary concept is not to follow our individual ideas, but to strive to rely on a virtuous teacher. This is like the worldly dutiful child. The reference of the worldly is an analogy for us to experience it from the proper frame of mind.

[17A, 17:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P12 L11]

If we don't have the concept of being dutiful right now, you might switch to another example. That is, if you rely on someone and always compromise, are willing to stoop down to abide by him, it is this kind of mentality. As for our current condition, [we] might as well refer to a businessman, he would never do business self-centeredly enjoying it. He would always find a way to please the customers, and think of all sorts of approaches to please the customers. Thus, he wakes up early in the morning and goes to bed very late at night. While others are resting, he is not – he has to think of his business! Now, we should apply this mentality, why? Why do it this way? Here is the cause [investing like a smart

businessman]! Everyone, please think over this concept carefully.

[17A, 18:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P13 L4]

Now we have all forsaken family enjoyment and come here [to the monastery]. May [I] ask, what for? Why do you come? You have to clearly recognize this for yourself, why do you come here? This should not be reminded by others, it is useless for others to tell you. You have to ask yourself, why? The reply: “I want to be a practitioner.” Why do you want to practice? And practice what? This is the most important. Alas! [We] think that it is a suffering world! Ah! Sigh! Totally not sustainable! Some may say, “In my case, I truly feel that this world is totally good for nothing.” If we apply a proverb: “mindfully resolve cyclic existence.” (生死心切) Why is there cyclic existence? Afflictions and non-virtuous deeds! What is affliction? It is our current perception, recognized as ignorance, which you are constantly circling with. Now, since you aspire to be liberated from cyclic existence, coming so far to be here, you still abide by your own afflictions – I want this, I want that. May [I] ask is this the cultivating attitude? Is it applying the practice?

[17A, 20:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P13 L12]

You arrived here and said, “Well! I came here to have my head shaved and to don the robes, take the monastic vows. Each day, [I] recited Buddha’s name so many times, did this many prostrations, and read how many sutras.” For this, I can’t say that you are not [applying the teaching], yet [I] can’t consider that you are – [you are] not quite there yet. Truly applying the teaching is to rely on all of these

substantial conditions for gradual advancement – to enable you to recognize affliction and purify it. Purify the arising affliction and apply remedies to counter the potential negative force planted by affliction, and that is how it works! Thus, with this understanding, will you still submit to yourself? Isn't this concept very obvious? Hence, this is the fundamental reason for relying on virtuous teachers and forsaking individual preference.

[17A, 21:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P14 L3]

In our application of Buddha Dharma now, the first major flaw is right here. The feeling that there is a need to become a monastic, and then going to have a master shave your head and it is done. Today, the head was shaved, very well, I will stay here with you for three days [or] one month and move to a shack the next day – this was considered a pretty good practitioner. May [I] ask, are you able to apply the teaching now? If you already understand [the teaching], why do you want to be a monastic? Why do you need to practice? If you do not understand, would being locked up in a shack help you meditate? Here, I believe we all have this proper awareness. Moreover, be seemingly agreeable and be by the teacher's side, being close to the teacher and also feel that this is not right and that is wrong [about the teacher]; this way is better and that is preferable. This is the first major flaw we have to improve. Well! Transformation requires hard work! However, it is worthwhile, very worthy! We will continue with the text.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 22:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P14 L11]

Look to the teacher in this way.

The above is about being like a dutiful child, it is between father and son. Now what should we do? Depend on the virtuous teacher. Why should we look to the teacher in this way? [We need to] realize that it is not possible for this excellent teacher to constantly give sincere advice and watch over your shoulder; it is definitely not possible, impossible. If you are sincerely in search of a virtuous teacher, you at least need to have heartfelt yearning. With regard to this reasoning, [I] will not discuss it further now. You must thoroughly and humbly observe how to please the teacher.

[17A, 22:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P15 L3]

Pay attention to this point! We claim to be monastics yet still need to please the virtuous teacher, isn't this a worldly attitude? From appearance it is but, in reality, it is totally opposite, it is not the same. Why? There are qualifications for an excellent teacher, which were in the preceding discussion; hence, we should not abide by [a teacher] randomly. The virtuous teacher should be endowed with such characteristics – a teacher with those qualifications – would this type of teacher interact or socialize with a worldly attitude? Never, absolutely not. For a being endowed with a hundred percent of these qualifications is Buddha. Buddha only aspires to give you the best and most perfect things. However, since his gift to you is the most encompassing, it is not the contaminated worldly things. The gift to you in this situation is the most complete Buddha Dharma instead of the contaminated worldly emotional attachment.

[17A, 24:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P15 L10]

Buddhism taught us the four reliances: [including] “to rely on the teaching instead of the person.” For this relying on

the teaching instead of the person, why do you need to act abiding by the teacher's facial expression? Well, this is exactly relying on the teaching instead of the person. To rely on the person is the worldly approach. Now, it is different. The worldly attitude is self-centered! Now you have to first analyze if [you] possess personal qualification [as a suitable disciple], and if the teacher has these qualifications. The reason that a virtuous one is qualified to be your teacher is because he is purified, and the required qualification for purification has its essence here. Once you have this recognition, your reliance of the virtuous teacher is what exactly? It is just to purify your afflictions. Isn't this very obvious! Usually you will have a preference for this or that, this is being in the midst of the afflictions. Stop your self-reliance and rely on the teacher – this is the best action for purifying affliction and this is relying on the teaching!

[17A, 25:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P16 L3]

So do not misconstrue this statement! The meaning of relying on the teaching instead of the teacher is right here – both [the teacher and teaching] are exhibited here with great clarity! This is the way it is. Hence, you have to distinguish clearly – what is the appearing sign? From the perspective of Dharma, it is what you need to rely on. If [you are] separated from the teacher and discussing the teaching, there is no such thing [as perfecting the learning]. Being separated from the Dharma and seeking a teacher is not going to work either, this we have to realize. So this is taught in the previous section, now the sutras are quoted for validation.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 25:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P16 L8]

The *Sutra on the Concentration Which Perceive the Buddha of the Present Face to Face* (Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhavasthita-samadhi-sutra) states:

Students who rely properly on the teacher should always give up their self-assertiveness and instead act in accordance with the will of the teacher.

The *Array of Stalks Sutra* is not the only one that tells us to forsake personal desire, so is this sutra. If you are able to thoroughly forsake it, your attainment will arise perfectly, it is just that simple. Prior to your attainment, if you are able to forsake it, then this is the typical example of the faith-level-Bodhisattva. This faith is known as the purified mind (淨心為信). What is purified? It is the purification of affliction. Hence, this is for you to recognize the exactness of the Dharma Characteristics – this is referring to the purified mind. What is contaminated in the mind? Affliction. However, before our attainment [of the purified mind] if you can completely avoid affliction, totally remove it, and rely on the virtuous teacher, this will be the time [for attainment of the purified mind]. Thus, it is the time to be qualified as the faith-level-Bodhisattva – this is the intended meaning.

[17A, 26:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P17 L1]

If you are able to understand this intended meaning, when you read the sutras you will understand. Well, well, well! Why the faith-level-Bodhisattva can avoid being dominated by arising afflictions. For the level-of-clarity (明字位) practitioners, when the first thought arises, the second thought will not follow. If the first thought of affliction arises and the practitioner is aware of it, then the second thought will not follow. This is for the practitioners at the level of clarity. That is how it works. Whereas for us now, not to

mention the second or the third thoughts, [the affliction] is still there even after several days. Others have identified it, but we are still in denial – this is the sign of being completely unaligned [with the teaching]. So the essence is to analyze this [affliction]. The next section has a remark that is very important!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 27:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P17 L7]

This refers to a fully qualified teacher, it is said that you should not let just anyone lead you around by the nose.

From the preceding qualifications, [the teacher] is required to have these good qualities. Then you can apply this approach! So next, it tells us to rely on the teaching instead of the teacher – does this teacher abide by the teaching? If so, we should rely on him! Thus, in this circumstance, you must follow [this teacher]. Other than these qualifications – anyone else – you should refrain from [letting them lead you by the nose]. What does “lead around by the nose” refer to? The noses of cattle and horses are harnessed – in fact; we are like that, too. We have to understand, what are the traits of cattle and horses? They are confused, ignorant animals. In our case, we are totally like that with regard to right and wrong teachings – unable to distinguish between them. If you were told to start going, [we] probably would be lost. At the time when you step on the path, you must have a guide and then, at that time, you hand your reins to him. The reason you hand it to him with absolutely confidence is due to the recognition described earlier.

[17A, 28:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P18 L3]

Therefore, the author just told us in the previous section – you have to turn over the reins to him so he can lead you out of the pit of suffering. If it is anyone other [than this qualified teacher], very sorry, you should never [offer your reins]. This is the first [of the nine attitudes with which to rely on a teacher]. With this recognition, now that we know it, follow by careful analysis in great detail. Often, between our mental momentum and all of our behavior, you have to make observations – removing afflictions is not easy, it is very difficult. Needless to say, you don't recognize [affliction] and, after recognition, it is still difficult [to remove it]. This is the first one. Next, the second attitude:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17A, 29:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P18 L8]

2) *The attitude which is like a diamond.* This means to make the relationship between teacher and student close and stable,

Once you have found such a great teacher, mindfully rely on him – absolutely do not allow individuality to take over. Abide by him constantly. If you are able to do so, then you will advance.

[17B, 00:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P19 L1]

However, by that time, the concern will be the arising obstacles – once you are away from the teacher, this “self” of yours will become active again. When this “self” is active, the contaminated cyclic existence will come again. Thus, at this time, the second step is being fearful of the inability to rely on virtuous teacher. Thus, the steadfast mentality must be there to rely on the teacher and never to be apart [from him/her]. It has to be very strong, like a diamond. A diamond is able to break things but cannot be broken easily. So a

true practitioner's attitude to rely on the excellent teacher should be like a diamond, regardless of the situation.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17B, 00:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P19 L6]

not to be split apart by anyone - demons, bad friends, and the like.

That is, do not be split apart [from virtuous teachers] by demons or bad friends. This bad friend, in fact, is most serious in our study of Buddha Dharma – it is the most serious and worst. This bad friend does not mean someone who argues and fights with you today. Well, [seemingly] good friends come to tell you: “Alas, so and so, why are you suffering here! Let’s go out to have fun – drink and chat.” You agree without hesitation, this is a bad friend. So we have to be very clear about this concept. Moreover, when the teacher is berating you, this bad friend comes along and tells you: “Sigh, I really sympathize with you! Someone like you who is so remarkable – you have great worldly knowledge, yet you gave it all up to come here. It is reasonable for others to complement you; whereas the teacher not only did not praise you, but he scolds you.” Sigh, you listened with great enthusiasm. Very sorry! This is the most dreadful aspect of a bad friend, just like that.

[17B, 01:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P20 L7]

Let’s carefully look at the sutras – the demons described never appear with three heads and six arms ready to kill you. Instead, they will definitely tell you, “Alas, you went through so much hardship, you have suffered so much in this task, why bother? Go enjoy yourself!” This is the attitude. Hence, if it were not for Buddha or a virtuous teacher instructing us

on this concept, we would never recognize it. As for this aspect, what should you do? Be “nonpartisan” and then you must have “intelligence.” If you do not possess these attributes, then it will be difficult for you to distinguish paradoxical teachings. Actually, [bad friend’s advice] is harming you and [the virtuous teacher] is in fact trying to help you, but you can’t tell them apart. By then, you will lean toward the wrong side and stop or even withdraw [from the path].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17B, 02:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P20 L14]

The same sutra states:

And forsake fickleness in close relationships and changeability in facial expressions.

In the above *Sutra on the Concentration*, it tells us: when relying on virtuous teachers, one has to be consistent. Do not be very close for a while, well, very close; and then, next moment, stop being close. Furthermore, what is in your mind – the aspiration comes from within, not from the superficial appearance. So when we read about the great teachers, too many of them are the type that, regardless of how much torment, the true recipient of the teaching will never leave. Whereas for us facing any slight upset now, the next day [we] pack up and leave. That is completely useless [for a practitioner] – totally useless. Although you might stay, the mind will wander – these are signs that we are truly not corresponding to the teaching. Upon facing situations like this, one should sincerely repent. The way to confess will be discussed later in great detail. So this is in regard to steadfastness. Next, what should be done?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17B, 03:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P21 L8]

3) The attitude which is like the earth.

We can imagine, when following a virtuous teacher, remaining by his side to study the Buddha Dharma taught by him. Well, instead of him teaching you Buddha Dharma, he assigns you to do chores for the teacher. “Take up the responsibilities of the guru.” To honor him, you must take on all of the responsibilities of the virtuous teacher; you must shoulder all of his responsibilities. What must it be like? “Like the earth.” Sigh! When you were told to take on some minor task, it is fine. Yet to bear this attitude like the earth – the earth bears all the weight and it will not turn down anything that comes its way.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P78; 17B, 04:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P21 L13]

This means to take on all the responsibilities of the guru’s activities and not become dispirited by any of the responsibilities asked of you.

One should take on all responsibilities without a bit of dispiritedness. Dispiritedness admittedly is like this, and even for the behavior of your mind, your mental and physical actions similarly will not have the slightest hesitation or tedium.

[17B, 04:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P22 L2]

**It is as Bo-do-wa told Jen-nga-wa's monks,
You have met with my *geshe* (*dge-bshes*) who is
clearly a bodhisattva, and have practiced in
accordance with his words. You have great merit!
Now let this be a privilege, not a burden.**

So the details will not be further discussed here. By telling us a quote from this ancient great teacher, we first need to properly establish this quoted concept within. It is saying that you are very fortunate to encounter such a great practitioner today. This is a virtuous teacher that we can truly rely on. In such situations, we have to practice according to the instructions of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and this virtuous teacher. This is our greatest blissful merit – truly our greatest merit! Never consider this as a burden, for this is truly our privilege! This statement is very easy to say, however, it is difficult to accomplish! Needless to say, to make it happen, it is very difficult to understand – too hard to comprehend!

[17B, 05:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P22 L10]

So here, I just suggest that everyone becomes clear of this concept first. Why? This is the first suggestion [to take it as privilege instead of burden]. The second one is, upon your understanding of the reasoning, then check to see whether or not the capacity has arisen. Often, we take care of our personal matters with tireless attitude – regardless of how troublesome or how far the distance, it will be done. When it comes to the matters of the virtuous teacher, alas, even with only a little care, you feel that this will not work, that won't either. There are all kinds of procrastinating excuses. Now, [the suitable disciple] is not like that. So what is the critical point? First, we have to be mentally prepared – establish the proper mentality. Establish what? When we

are mindfully engaging in our own affairs, actually it can be our loss, for we may engage in contaminated deeds. It is only when you abide by a virtuous teacher and engage in an instructed task by taking on the responsibilities, then [our] negative karmic deeds will be reduced and merits will increase. This is our greatest privilege. For now, if you are aspiring to be reborn to Pure Land, this will be the merit for that rebirth. Eventually, this [reliance] will be our future enlightened physical form with all kinds of adornments at the time of achieving your Buddhahood. The causal stage starts from here.

[17B, 07:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P23 L5]

Once you have the recognition of this concept, you will engage with great joy. You will have the sense of a businessman – you feel the hardship, but it is good! It is making money. Businesspeople are not afraid of hardship; they are afraid of not being profitable. It is the same for us Buddha Dharma practitioners. We should not actually worry about engaging in it, rather, [we] should be more worried about not getting involved. This should honestly be our concern: not being able to accumulate the Dharma wealth corresponding to the Buddha Dharma. This concept should be established first.

[17B, 07:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P23 L9]

I was out for the past few days. When I returned and looked, wow! I was very pleased and commend [you all]. Inside and out, there were such high spirits in cleaning. Now, we might want to calmly contemplate: before we cleaned up and after cleaning, how do you feel? Seems to be the same. Over the past two days, you worked very hard, [whereas if you spend the day] sitting there and [the day will pass] as

well. If you slept in for the past two days, today will arrive in the same manner. However, the end effect is completely different. You slept for several days and are still lying there today. The more lying down you do, the lazier you become and the more lethargic you are. At the most, [your] mind may think about [doing something], that is all. Once you have done the cleaning, now you will not be that tired either! Instead you will have joy within. When looking around, you will be pleased, too. I believe we can all sense it! Although your effort is little now, in the future, this cause will gradually enhance your capacity if the engagement is there. Whereas the other [attitude], your [mind] will become slower and duller.

[17B, 08:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P24 L2]

So why is it that many people are smarter than cows? These animals have nothing much to do, they either stay there or lay down. Then, it gets interesting! They will first eat a lot to stuff their stomachs, and then slowly regurgitate it to enjoy the food. This is what the cattle and horses do. Human beings are not like this, [we] are different – after the task is done, the mind is still engaged, still continuously advancing. This is even more so for Bodhisattvas! This is the basic difference. Hence, in the future, when you truly understand the karmic tendencies – I mean after true recognition instead of merely talking about theoretical cause and effect. All of Buddha Dharma talks about karma. Just by talking about the superficial words, the understanding may not be there. If you understand this appearing sign of karma, by analyzing your mind, you will understand and comprehend.

[17B, 09:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P24 L9]

Similarly, after the deed is done, it seems like there is nothing to it. However, the effect is totally different. For the former, you work so hard to accumulate merit to go to Pure Land in the future and for the eventual perfect adornment of your ultimate enlightened physical form. As for the other type of person, what will become of them? They will fall and become cows and horses. This revelation here is very obvious and clear. Later on, the difference in effect will be great. Once you have experienced either engaging in it or not, the present difference seems non-obvious. Hence, we often say that the difference between applying the teaching and not applying is that one is wasteful and the other knows how to make the most of it. This is what we should know. Thus, to actually apply the teaching accordingly is our greatest blissful merit and greatest wisdom. This is our greatest privilege and our best harvest. Next is the fourth one:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 10:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P25 L2]

4) How to assume responsibilities. This itself consists of six attitudes.

So for us now, first forsake self-assertiveness and, second, never leave [the virtuous teacher] under any circumstance. The mind should be like an unbreakable diamond yet can break everything else. Once you rely on a virtuous teacher, then all afflictions will be destroyed and [your relationship with the teacher] cannot be destroyed by anything. Moreover, the next step is to take on responsibility. Once you have taken up the entire load and completed it, then you will become Buddha! Thus, at the causal stage,

what should we do? Upon carrying the load of responsibilities, what is next? Now the following section is divided into six responsive attitudes.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 11:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P25 L8]

The first, an attitude like the foothills,

What are the foothills referring to?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 11:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P25 L10]

means that any suffering that might arise does not sway you.

This is what the foothills are about.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 11:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P25 L12]

When Jen-nga-wa was staying in Ruk-ba (Rug-pa), Gom-ba-yon-den-bar's (sGom-pa-yon-ten-bar) health declined due to the great cold. He then sought the advice of the venerable Shon-nu-drak (gZhon-nu-grags) as to whether he should leave. Shon-nu-drak replied, "We have stayed many times in Indra's palace, a comfortable residence with good material necessities. Only today do you have the experience of relying on a Mahayana teacher and listening to the teachings. Therefore, stay where you are, as is proper!"

First, be steadfast. The author illustrates with a typical example – Jen-nga-wa, who was a Dharma brother of Bo-

do-wa. In other words, Bo-do-wa was a primary disciple of Venerable Drom-don-ba. At the place where they were staying, there was one practitioner – one of the disciples who thought that place was too cold; Tibet is indeed very cold, well, too difficult to endure! Thus this disciple told the teacher that he relied upon: “Alas! This place is too unbearable, what should we do about it? Let’s think about it, can we move to another location?” Well! This is his teacher’s reply: “For a comfortable residence with material enjoyment, if we really want to talk about enjoyments, [we have] been to Indra’s palace many times.” Indra’s palace is the most prestigious and laudable place – who knows how many times [we] have been there. None of us is an exception. We have been in hell many times and have also been reborn in the deity realm many times – no one is an exception. However, in the end, we still have to cycle through samsara – still in cyclic existence – it was all to no avail. In order to actually escape, what is required? We are required to study and apply Buddha Dharma. In order to do so, [we] have to rely on a great virtuous teacher, and this teacher should be a perfectly encompassing Mahayana virtuous teacher. “Now that we are able to rely on this great teacher and hear this perfect and complete teaching, today is just the beginning. Thus, you should be steadfast and adhere to it. The mind has to be steady and stable, never fluctuate – absolutely no fluctuation!” So, in this situation, we might as well examine ourselves: are we truly enduring the unbearable? We are now actually very comfortable and everything is readily available here. Compared to [these Tibetan great teachers], this is heavenly. So this is the first one [of the six responsive attitudes] – the attitude like the foothills. The second [of the six responsibilities] is,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 14:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P27 L2]

The second, an attitude like a worldly servant, means to perform even the worst tasks in their entirety without wavering.

This means that, regardless of what he is doing, the “worst tasks” are of two kinds: one is external and the other is internal. For now, this is referring to the external aspect. That is, for you to pick up filth, clean the toilet or manage the kitchen, these things that happen to be what you are afraid of and are unwilling to do. Regardless of what the tasks are, [your] mind is without regret or doubt, without any wavering. When you say, “I came here to learn the teaching, yet I was told to do this!” This is having doubt. Otherwise, “I feel that I am a respected worldly person with high regard, how did I end up cleaning the toilet here, alas!” You may feel ashamed. No so! [We should] totally abide by what the excellent teacher tells us to do. Even if he did not say so and I recognize that he will need to do so, [I] will earnestly do it. So it is like a worldly housekeeper, which is a servant, and this is what servant does.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 15:17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P27 L10]

For example,

Next is an example.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 15:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P27 L12]

the scholar [Atisha] and all his translators had to stay in Tsang in an area of sewage and mud. Geshe Drom-don-ba took off all his clothes and cleaned up the filth. He

covered the area with dry white earth, from where no one knows. He even built a [stone and earth] mandala in front of the Elder Atisha. Therefore, the Elder exclaimed, “Ah-ray! I had one like you in India, too.”

At that time in Tibet, it was during the time when Venerable Atisha was in Tibet. There was a great gathering. “The scholar and all his translators had to stay in an area” that was a center – a very important one – where everyone gathered. Before the assembly, the area had a shoal of muddy water. Venerable Drom-don-ba – what a remarkable being – saw the mud then took off his clothes to clean it up. Because nothing else was available - life was very harsh and things were very scarce, [he] used clothes to carry the mud. Then, from an unknown place, [he] brought clean earth to cover up that area. When it was all done, this was where his teacher – Venerable Atisha – sat and, in front of the teacher, an altar was offered. When Venerable Atisha saw it, he responded happily: “Ah! Remarkable, marvelous! Surprisingly, you are able to do something like this. In India, there were people like you, too.”

[17B, 16:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P28 L8]

We have read about at Buddha’s causal stage, when people laid their hair down to cover the ground [for Buddha]. Now, for you to take off your clothes and hand you a broom then ask, “So and so, you go do the sweeping!” Well! You will feel disrespected. We have to reflect within on this. And then when [the teacher] is standing there, [you] sweep reluctantly, once he leaves, you walk away as well. In this situation, we can compare and contrast. Moreover, it is important to recognize, why is [the teacher] doing so? This is critical. Next is the sixth one [out of the entire nine attitudes to rely on the teachers].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 17:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P28 L13]

The third, an attitude like a sweeper,

The sweeper – back then in India, bustling big cities had people who specialized in clean up human waste – this [profession] was described in the *Lotus Sutra*. Actually this kind of sweeper, we also had that in Mainland China when I was young. In the countryside, of course, a sweeper is not needed. But in the city, this was a specific profession. In India, because the caste system is very distinct, sweepers were considered as lower class, the lowest class. Now, our reliance on the excellent teacher also requires us to have this kind of attitude. This is specific.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 18:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P29 L5]

means to eliminate completely all pride and feelings of superiority, and consider yourself to be lower than your guru.

This is the most important point of this attitude. When you rely on the excellent teacher, you mentally have to eliminate this. Completely eliminate all pride and feelings of superiority. This pride is feeling that you are superior to the teacher, or even looking down upon him; this attitude is absolutely not encouraged, definitely should never have it. Regardless of your true integrity, even if you are better than him, you still have to humbly learn from him. This is a very important concept. If you are unable to abide accordingly in

this circumstance, there are two choices: one is to sincerely repent; the other is that you would be better off to leave. This is absolutely true. Otherwise, this would result in great personal harm. Especially in the future, when you meet a true virtuous teacher, any slight arrogance in your mind toward the virtuous teacher will result in very serious, grave non-virtuous effects. This was described in the scriptures. On the contrary, if you are sincerely inspired to study Buddha Dharma, get rid of the pride and then you will receive great benefit. Even if he is not an excellent teacher, once you are able to remove this pride, the benefit is yours. Not to mention if it is toward a virtuous teacher. So, earlier we mentioned the elder monk who was ridiculed by four young monks – they knocked his head with a ball, “bang” on him once and said: “For you, here is your first fruit.” The old monk actually had that attainment [stream-enterer’s level], why? The key reason is that the old monk never had any preconceived arrogance and he corresponded with the teaching. Under both of these conditions, the attainment arose. This we should understand. Next, are the words from two teachers’ of the lineage.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 20:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P30 L5]

As Geshe Drom-don-ba said, “the water of good qualities does not collect on the heights of pride,”

This pride is like the mountain. So it is known as the heights of pride: on the mountaintop, water cannot be stored – it drains away. Not to mention that it has no water to begin with and rain is not retained when it falls. Often, we say: “Yes, I understood it!” When hearing it, “Ah, I got it!” Since you got it, why bother to come to listen to him? [The teaching] is not kept in the mind at all, not at all. Hence, the

aforementioned Sung-pu-wa was very clear. He was such a great virtuous teacher – when he listened to others teach, well, he didn't claim that he knew it all. Instead, he listened attentively. Afterwards, he would appreciate: "I have received two benefits." Moreover, Buddha always demonstrated in this way. When Buddha listened to others' teaching, he displayed joyful sincerity and respect. Why? From where does Buddhahood arise? Buddha arose from listening to the teaching; the teaching is the mother of the Conqueror. So when Buddha heard the Dharma, his gratitude, delight, and respectfulness spontaneously arose in his mind. Whereas when we hear the teaching now, [we] may feel, "Well! This is nothing." This is the lack of concordance of your mind. Thus, even if we admit that we don't understand, which is the correct attitude and even if you understood, you still need to praise and rejoice.

[17B, 21:27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P31 L2]

So from my reading, there is a magnificent monk during the early years of the Republic of China: Venerable Lai-guo (來果老和尚) of Yang-zhou Gao-min Monastery. He was a great Zen master, although [he was] not like Venerable Xu-yun (虛雲老和尚) who was known as one of the several high monks of the Republic of China era. However, Venerable Lai-guo was a very remarkable practitioner of the Zen lineage! What was his practice? He practiced, "Who is reciting Buddha's name?" One day, he went to a place and unexpectedly saw this writing on the wall, "Who is reciting Buddha's name?" Upon seeing it, he was overjoyed with praise, why? Because he corresponded with it, this is his mental reaction. If we were to encounter this kind of

situation now, without a concordant mental attitude – then the most important thing for us right now is to recognize it immediately. Reflect upon this attitude, sigh; our mind is not aligned with the Dharma. This is what we should sincerely recognize for now.

[17B, 22:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P31 L9]

Often, we look for faults in others. Recognize that for what is right or wrong - what is more important is not the external condition; it is the reflection of your mind when facing the external object, and what triggers the seeds planted within. This is what we need to recognize. If, for now, we are unable to recognize this, then all the rest is empty talk. Hence, when some people say that you should not be discerning, this is to say that we are making absurd discernments, which result in such phenomena. In fact, for us to understand the Dharma characteristics (法相) proficiently – why does the arising object cause me to have this kind of mental attitude? How should I react when it is positive? How should I react when it is negative? And then you are able to distinguish proficiently: for the positive ones, rejoice, praise, delight and be pleased to enhance it. For the negative ones, strive at improving it. This is the actual Buddha Dharma that we ought to apply, just like that. Continuing...

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 23:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P32 L2]

and as Je-nge-wa said, “In the planting time of spring, look at whether the green growth comes from the high mountain peaks or from the low valleys.”

Well! You may observe in the springtime, where does the first new sprout come from? Is it from the peak of the mountain? Or is it from the low valley? Of course, the high mountain peaks are covered with white snow. Upon melting, it turns bare like a desert, whereas the lower part is thriving. Why? It is due to this pride – being unable to retain the Dharma water. This is the instruction from both virtuous teachers [Geshe Drom-don-ba and Je-nga-wa]. Next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 24:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P32 L8]

The fourth, an attitude like a foundation, means to take on even the heavy responsibilities of the most arduous activities of your guru with pleasure.

The analogy of a “foundation” is that it is like a carrier – the contemporary vehicle or car for carrying heavy loads. Regardless of the weight, it is able to take the load and deliver it to the designated destination. It is the same for us now – we should take on all the assigned tasks from the virtuous teacher and deliver them to the proper locations. The reason that they are qualified as virtuous teachers is so they can deliver you from the entrance of the hell to encompassing enlightenment. Hence, it is necessary to have this kind of mental recognition and abide by it. Next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 17B, 25:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P33 L1]

The fifth, an attitude like a dog, means not to get angry even when your guru despises or berates you.

Why an attitude like a dog? No matter what happens, a dog’s attitude toward its owner, regardless of how the owner

berates the dog, the dog will not get mad or angry. This is very true, if you take a look at the pet dog, even if it were spanked by the owner, it cries but still circles around. It will not just bark and run away. That is the analogy. Earlier, we talked about the attitude of a worldly servant. To perform the worst worldly tasks constitutes external actions. The attitude of a dog illustrates the mentality within. Regardless of what approaches the virtuous teacher applies to berate you, you will never hold a grudge. Take a look in the *Biography of Venerable Milarepa* – no matter how he was treated by his teacher, he only had this thought, “It is my own karmic obscuration! It has to be my karmic obstacle!” If it were any of us in the same circumstance, the feeling would certainly be: “Alas! This teacher is absolutely cruel and unreasonable.” However, Milarepa did not react that way at all. Why? For now, we just need to have the aspirational wish to attain the equivalent achievement – this attitude is positive. But why is it that he can achieve it and [we] are unable to? This is what we really should pay serious attention to. Once you understand Buddha Dharma, by then, you will recognize why Venerable Milarepa achieved it and you cannot.

[17B, 26:37; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P33 L13]

At the same time, I spoke earlier of the appearing sign of the Bodhisattva at the level of faith – what is the Bodhisattva at the level of faith? It is the faith from a purified mind. What is the faith from a purified mind? When a given situation arises, one’s mind does not generate contaminated afflictive karma. With each of our arising conditions, your reflection will always be worldly; this is very obvious and clear. This means that we are all outside of the door [of the teaching] – regardless of how much logic you may present, it is of no avail. As for Milarepa, no matter how unreasonable the

situation is, he never thought of others as unreasonable. He only had the thought of: "Alas, my internal karmic obscurations are not purified! Is there anything else?" This is a typical sign of purification. This is what we should recognize from reading the biography. Just by reading it alone, you will not identify it. With this recognition, that is the time for us to strive at practice, work at practicing diligently. Thus, all of the sections that follow will elaborate on this concept.

[17B, 27:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P34 L7]

For now, we should definitely refrain from practicing blindly! If you do that hastily, it is considered practicing blindly and meditating aimlessly! You lack the recognition of the actual appearing sign. You may think that a few prostrations or chanting some sutras [as practice] has merit. Of course the merit is there, however, it is applying twice the effort for half of the result – double the effort with half of the effect. If you are able to close the door in a retreat and forsake everything else, that is remarkable. With the above proper recognition to apply the teaching, wow, the effect will be completely opposite. Normally, our worldly reference to getting twice the effect with half the effort – if applied here, there would be a thousand-fold difference. Thus, those accomplished practitioners, at their initial entrance on the path, they had to continuously rely on a virtuous teacher. The higher their accomplishment was, the more earnest they were in practice. If you are able to rely all the way beyond the attainment of the state of ultimate equanimity [refer to 2B translation, this is the fifty-first disposition of the mind state on the Mahayana path] (等覺後心), then your path will be the most direct, quickest, and most effective. These cases are illustrated clearly in both the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Array of Stalks Sutra*. In the *Lotus Sutra*, Buddha

said, “Ah, I have tried to tell you for so long, everyone must make effort to apply accordingly! Yet you did not take my advice.” It is not that you have not listened, [rather,] upon hearing some and applying it in your own way - you only select what is concordant with your preference. Will there be accomplishment? Of course there will be, however, it won't be accurate. Hence, it is why the author first told us to forsake our “self-assertiveness” – that is, you should not have the thought of, “Well, I am going to practice now!” I thought that practice should be a certain way. This is self-cherishing - totally forsake this attitude, completely get rid of this thought.

[18A, 00:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P39 L1]

With the virtuous teacher, it would be best for you to be meek and tactful to understand what he is saying and what he means. The more profoundly, thoroughly, and completely you understand him, then abiding by him will only benefit you, there will only be benefits. With regard to this concept, take gradual steps and continue to study earnestly in order to comprehend. I just mention this in passing.

[18A, 00:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P39 L4]

Thus, when sincerely relying on a virtuous teacher, here the text says that, regardless of how much he berates you, not only should you be unafraid in appearance, but the internal attitude should also be the same. Moreover, if you consider from the opposite angle, being berated by the teacher will purify your nonvirtuous karma and help you to accumulate merits. Before comprehending this perception, you might as well think of it this way. In the future, when you learn more, you will automatically understand this reasoning – it is 100% accurate. I guarantee you this here if you are

earnest about this learning – otherwise, the benefit will not arise. If you continue learning, I can prove to you from the sutras and commentaries, here and there! There is no exception, not one exception. Now let us continue with the following ancient teachers. Right away, there is one typical example:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 18A, 01:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P40 L1]

For example, each time that Dro-lung-ba (sTod-lung-pa) met with Geshe Lha-so (dGe-bshes lHa-bzo), Dro-lung-ba would berate him. Lha-so's disciple Nyak-mo-wa (Nyag-mo-ba) said, "This master hates us, both teacher and students!" To which Geshe Lha-so replied, "Do you think that he is berating me? To me it seems like I am being blessed by Heruka each time he does this."

This was the way Dro-lung-ba treated one of his disciples; Geshe Lha-so was his disciple. Every time Geshe Lha-so visited his teacher Dro-lung-ba, [the teacher] always berated Geshe Lha-so, scolded him. At that time, Geshe Lha-so was already a remarkable achiever; he visited with a group of his own disciples. Geshe Lha-so was unaffected by the treatment, whereas his disciple could not bear it and asked his teacher: "Alas! What is wrong with the grand master? He seems to be prejudiced towards us. Every time we visit him, he will specifically vent his anger on us!" What was Geshe Lha-so's reply? He said: "Did you think that he was berating me? Alas! You thought he was scolding you? You really don't understand! Every time I come here, being berated by my teacher is the best instruction, the best lecture, and the best blessing!"

[18A, 02:49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P40 L11]

Who is Heruka? Heruka is a chosen deity who manifests as a wrathful image. For instance, our Bodhisattva Manjusri, Manjusri Bodhisattva appears in two forms: one is the Manjusri Bodhisattva that is known as the “serene form”, and the other image is Yamataka who projects a wrathful countenance, which is [Manjusri’s] angry form. So what does this wrathful image have to be? It has to be the Sambhogakaya, has to be the blissful form. “You interpreted his words as berating me, yet I think of it as the best blessing!” Examine it; there is profound meaning here, very profound!

[18A, 03:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P41 L3]

Now we may not understand it all, let us take a look at a typical Chinese story. Our ancient Chinese masters would use a stick, scold, shout, or beat, any of these. Well, when seeing the teacher, you could be scolded, berated or hit. This goes as far as the story of the “index finger Zen,” where the [disciple’s] finger was cut off. There was such an incident. This was just like how Chen Mu-zhou treated his disciple Fa-yen. When this Fa-yen visited him, one “pow”! [The teacher Chen Mu-zhou] broke his leg. Well, sorry, this imbued the greatest empowerment! It was far more than scolding and beating, it was like that! This is what we really should recognize. Thus, here, please pay attention: to have an attitude like a dog, to be obedient like a dog. Under any circumstance, you should never allow the affliction to arise.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 18A, 04:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P41 L10]

Also the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines (Asts-sāharikā) says: Even if the instructors of the

teachings seem to despise and to ignore those who want their teachings, do not challenge them. Persist tirelessly and respectfully, and diligently seek the teachings.

The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines is the “Prajnaparamita.” “Prajnaparamita” has an extensive version and an abridged version; this *Eight Thousand Lines* is the abridged version of the Prajnaparamita. Actually, here it is referring to the fourth assembly; the first and second assemblies are both extensive. Thus, in this sutra, it tells us that if the master who is delivering the teaching “despises” and “ignores” his disciple who seeks Dharma, such as signs of hostility, rage, and berating, in this case, you should never look from these perspectives and randomly discriminate incorrectly from your own point of view, do not judge incorrectly. This is very important, extremely important! Not only is it in the “Prajnaparamita,” it is also specifically stated in *The Array of Stalks Sutra*, it is reiterated in *The Array of Stalks Sutra*. Manjusri Bodhisattva told Youthful Sudana, “If you want to achieve Buddhahood, you must rely on a virtuous teacher. What should you do when relying on a virtuous teacher? Tirelessly apply many different approaches.” Lastly, [Manjusri] told him, “What if this virtuous teacher appears to be ill?” In other words, when [he] has unreasonable requests, what should you do? “You must absolutely not view this in a negative way” and explain to [the virtuous teacher] clearly and plainly. Here is the same case: towards this teacher, [we] should never retreat from him or forsake him. Forsaking is to give up and say, “Well, I won’t learn from him.” Retreating is to become disheartened. Not only should you not retreat or forsake, what should you do? “Diligently seek the teachings.” The original intent to study may not be that strong, but after being despised and ignored, you became stronger and

spurred to strive harder to advance! “Persist tirelessly and respectfully” – pay respect to the teacher, never forsake him but follow the teacher continuously.

[18A, 07:01; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P42 L10]

Last time, we mentioned Venerable Dao-xuan. Upon his return, his teacher refused him, scolded him, and turned his back on him. Did he bear any grudge? If there was any bit of grudge, today we would not have this perfect teaching [of precepts] that was preserved, right? Not only he was not like that, but [he] also did “diligently seek the teachings.” Furthermore, he even wholeheartedly pleaded with his teacher and followed his teacher, and eventually attained achievement. Regardless of whether it was in India, in China or in Tibet, this [attitude] was all the same. This is the most distinctive and typical example for us. Lastly:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 07:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P43 L1]

**The sixth, an attitude like a ferry,
Like a ferry.**

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 07:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P43 L3]

means not to tire of deeds for your guru's sake no matter how many times you engage in your guru's activities.

Lastly [the attitude] like a ferry, no matter how much work comes from the teacher, coming and going, do so without any weariness, not even a speck of dispiritedness. What is the difference between this attitude of a “ferry” and

a “foundation”? This ferry is “seems to come and seems to go,” bearing loads with no exception. The foundation [or chariot] usually goes from here to there. These two are slightly different. Here we will not go into too much detail. Basically when we rely on a virtuous teacher, [we] must be steadfast in our mental perception – we have to do it the stated way, apply accordingly. For now, based on this principle, what are we supposed to do next? And what is the root?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 18A, 08:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P43 L10]

b) In particular, training in faith, the root

This is most important in our study of Buddha Dharma. To apply the Dharma, the key is to rely on a virtuous teacher. First of all, to rely on a virtuous teacher, one needs to cultivate faith in the virtuous teacher; this is the foundation of everything.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P79; 18A, 09:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P43 L13]

The *Formulae of the Three Jewels' Blaze* (Ratnolka-dhāraṣi) states:

Faith is the prerequisite of all good qualities —

A procreator of them, like a mother

Who then protects and increases them.

It clears away doubts, frees you from the four rivers [ignorance, attachment, craving, and wrong views],

And establishes you in the prosperous city of happiness and goodness.

Faith cuts through gloom and clarifies the mind.

It eliminates pride and is the root of respect.

**It is a jewel and a treasure.
Like hands, it is the basis of gathering virtue.
It is the best of feet for going to liberation.**

This paragraph is quoted from the sutra. It states that faith is the prerequisite, which is the basic foundation, the initial foundation. What is it like? It is like a mother who procreates. With faith, everything else will follow. Without faith, there is nothing to talk about. This is also mentioned in *the Array of Stalks Sutra*, “Faith is the foundation of all good qualities” – it is the path... the root source – [the achievement] arises from here. All good qualities, the motherly source of all good qualities, they arise from here. “It nurtures all virtuous roots,” this is the reasoning: faith increases and protects [our virtuous roots], so all meritorious qualities appear from here. For us to apply the teaching now, if there is anything we don’t understand, we won’t accomplish it. Whereas, with understanding, a little bit of doubt can be removed. This all depends on a virtuous teacher to remove all of your doubts, and to enable [you] to cross the current of cyclic existence to the other shore. All of this depends on a virtuous teacher. And what should we depend on to rely on the virtuous teacher? Depend on your faith toward the teacher. Once this is developed, [all] issues will be resolved. The root cause for a virtuous teacher to become one is due to his aspiration to save us. The reason we have not been saved is because of [our] lack of faith in him. So the key point of all the back and forth discussion is this, this is what we should recognize first.

[18A, 11:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P44 L13]

Faith “establishes you in the prosperous city of happiness and goodness.” It is like a city of ingenious joy, all prosperous happiness arises from this place. “Faith cuts

through gloom and clarifies the mind.” Once your faith is pure, we can see that this “gloom” is actually our afflictions, which are like the filth of the mundane world. Faith eliminates pride and is the root of respect. With faith, naturally you will not be arrogant; you will realize all benefits and good qualities rely on him [the object of our faith, namely the teacher]. So how could you be arrogant? Conversely, the reason behind our arrogance is our lack of faith, and that is the time for us to strive harder to apply the teaching. At this juncture, be more mindful in every aspect. When you feel, alas, the feeling of loathing is arising, that should not be the time to pick on him. Rather, you should reflect by saying, “Alas! Why does this arrogance arise within me?” That is the time for us to truly recognize [our own afflictions]! So, Buddha Dharma is not a theory for you to talk about, you have to recognize it clearly! If you belittle everyone, it is not others’ fault. Rather, it shows [your own] inferiority. If the other person is good, you can help him to enhance the goodness. If he is not, you need to support and help him! How can you find fault in others who are not as good as you?

[18A, 12:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P45 L9]

This is similar to the way we look at our own children. You would definitely not, a parent will not see it like this: “well, I am a parent and the children are all underachievers” you look down upon them. What parents in this world would look down upon their children? It is not likely! All parents view their own children as the most outstanding, right? Now you want to apply the teachings, the aspiration of Mahayana Bodhisattva is far superior to parents’ affection! So regardless of whether others are truly better or worse than you, how can you have the slightest attitude of arrogance? This reasoning is very simple, if you have an arrogant

attitude, you have already departed from Buddha Dharma, already left it more than three thousand miles away. This is where we really need to be introspective. “Faith is like a jewel and a treasure.” It is the most superior treasure trove. To attain this treasure, we rely on our feet to get there, and then it becomes available. “Like hands, it is the basis of gathering virtue.” Once arrived there, you rely on your hands to fetch the treasure. All of this is quoted from this Sutra. We will just read over the paragraph below.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 13:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P46 L3]

Also the Ten Teaching Sūtra (Daśa-dharmaka-sūtra) states:

**Faith is the best of vehicles,
Definitely delivering you into buddhahood.
Therefore, persons of intelligence
Rely on the guidance of faith.**

A person truly endowed with wisdom would definitely apply accordingly. So our current state is due to our ignorance, our foolishness! Whereas we think we know a lot but, in fact, those who know a lot are full of worldly intelligence that leads to arguments. What harms us is nothing but this!

[18A, 14:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P46 L7]

**Virtues will not arise,
In people who have no faith,
Just as green sprouts do not grow
From seeds scorched by fire.**

If we do not have this [faith] within, what is it like? Well, sorry to say! Just like scorched seed, it will not sprout – nothing will grow!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 14:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P46 L10]

Thus, in light of what you gain when it is present and what you lose when it is not present, faith is the basis of all good qualities.

Where there is faith, there is advancement. Without faith, you will fail. So, the text says all good qualities are derived from faith. Thus, faith is the root of all good qualities.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 14:42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P46 L13]

Geshe Drom-dön-ba said to Atisha, "In Tibet there are many who are meditating and practicing, yet they are not attaining any special good qualities."

Well! This statement greatly deserves our analysis and awareness. It says that we have many practitioners here, but they applied the teachings without profound achievement. Why? Let's review it now. We practice so much here, well, so much Buddhist instruction, why is that so few have achieved? Even for myself – I prostrate so many times daily, chanting so many Sutras each day, and my head has been shaved for a long time, why is the achievement still not there? Regretfully, the answer is below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 15:24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P47 L6]

The Elder said, "All the significant and insignificant good qualities that pertain to the Mahayana arise from relying on a guru.

The amount of Mahayana good qualities will all arise from relying on virtuous teacher, from relying on an excellent teacher!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 15:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P47 L8]

“You Tibetans only think of gurus as being common persons. How can good qualities arise?”

Nowadays, the way you folks treat a virtuous teacher, you seem to look at him as ordinary being. May I ask, from where will any good quality arise? From where will the merits arise? Not to mention the Mahayana practice, it applies to Hinayana practice, too! This is why we should read the Sutras frequently and keep reflecting on their teachings. Last time, we already talked about the old monk. Today, here is another story: about a woman, there was a woman, who is very devoted in making offerings to the three Jewels. During Buddha’s time, the offerings were made through inviting the monk over for a meal at the [layperson’s] house. She often invited an older monk; but this older monk actually knew very little, he was not too knowledgeable. He enjoyed the food but, after the meal, he was not able to impart any teachings. However, this woman treated him with great respect, and pleaded over and over again. As for us right now, if you were capable of imparting teachings, people

would not necessarily pay you respect. Not to mention a monk who does not even utter a word. If for us, “this...” Well! Her reaction is not so! She was very respectful. After offering the meal, she implored for Dharma teachings, but this older monk did not know too much, and he declined by giving all sorts of excuses. She kept requesting respectfully, and he kept declining; the more he declined, the more respectful she became.

[18A, 17:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P48 L5]

Once, the invitation was made with the same respect. Upon accepting the invitation, after the meal, he was urged to give a Dharma talk. This time, well, he felt really bad; he kept searching for words to say but was unable to do so. He didn't know what to say. He just watched the woman kneeling there and listening. Whereas this woman, due to her lack of arrogant attitude, paid more and more respect and thought, “I must have not be fulfilled, there must be something I did not complete.” She did not have a single negative thought, so she kept kneeling there without raising her head. She kept being mindful with continuous respect, contemplating on her own faults as well as the Buddha Dharma. So that older monk saw the person there – such a pious laywoman sitting there. He took the opportunity, while she was not looking, to stealthily and quietly come down from his seat. He snuck out!

[18A, 18:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P48 L12]

After he left, this laywoman did not notice. She continued to be respectful and only thought, “Why hasn't he started teaching? There must be a reason.” She kept on thinking and thinking about it over and over again. She thought about the worldly suffering in the past. And, now,

seeking the Buddha Dharma still filled with suffering, how meaningless! The more she contemplated, the more she was inspired to pursue profound teachings – the in depth Dharma. What were Buddha’s original teachings to us? They were the truths of suffering. Usually, these are superficial but, because her faith was gradually purified, she no longer was in concordance with affliction and internalized more and more purification. As a result, she was awakened! She attained the first stage of realization. Wow, she was overjoyed! She raised her head to look and, well, the older monk had disappeared! Ah, filled with appreciation, she then ran to the Sangha community to look for the older monk to express her gratitude. This older monk did not know what had happened. When he returned, he was too embarrassed to see anyone, so he shut his door and did not want to go out. The woman went to thank him. He thought it could be... well, could be he left without acknowledgement and caused some trouble. The more she searched, the more fearful he became. In the end, this woman was determined to find him, and she did. She related the whole incident [of her attainment] to him. Well! After listening the older monk was so ashamed and embarrassed. As a result, the older monk also attained [certain] enlightenment. This case is cited in *The Storehouse of Sundry Valuables Sutra*, you can refer to it in detail.

[18A, 19:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P49 L8]

So let’s not only talk about the Mahayana, it is the same for the Hinayana. This is the first thing we should be aware of and reflect on. However, to be honest, for us to be mindful and reflect now, our level is not there yet. Why? For our mental defilement right now is weighty, very coarse. Sometimes, yes, we listen to and feel good about [the teaching], but, at other times, no advice can be accepted.

Why is that? This is due to our weighty mental defilements; this is what we should recognize. As for how to purify it, the author will teach us a complete set of approaches - thorough methods. Let's continue:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 20:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P49 L13]

Then again, when someone asked the Elder in a loud voice, "Atisha, please give an instruction," he laughed.

There was someone who approached Venerable Atisha and shouted, "Venerable Atisha, please give instruction!" Normally, when we are really respectful and have travelled from afar, well, [we will] be wholeheartedly respectful – with mindful veneration. Be very cautious; we would not even dare to lift our head. We would never shout with carelessness and a nonchalant attitude, this would not happen. So what does it explain here? He [this person who was shouting] did not bear any respect within, which was the unbridled attitude, thus, Venerable Atisha –

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 20:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P50 L5]

"Ha, ha. My hearing is very good. For me to give personal instructions you need faith, faith, faith!" Thus, faith is extremely important.

He laughed aloud and said, "Alas! My ears are perfectly fine and you need not shout so loud!" So that was what [Atisha] meant. In fact, what does it mean here? It is not literal, actually it is: "for you to truly study, you need to thoroughly understand the essence of the teachings." Didn't you ask for teachings? What is the essence? "Faith in

confidence” and “faith in belief.” There are these two types. First of all, have faith in our minds. We need to know, what is in our minds right now? Your mind should be “self-contented and self-perfected” – basically, it is Buddha nature! But now what? They are contaminated by afflictions. What should be relied on to eliminate these afflictions? Rely on virtuous teachers! Once you truly have a virtuous teacher, purification will naturally follow. But to rely on a virtuous teacher – if there is a lack of a virtuous teacher – it all depends on whether you have developed faith in the virtuous teacher – this is how it works. Thus, this is what we have to recognize.

[18A, 22:00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P50 L13]

In Buddhism, often we divide *Mahayana into three systems. Regardless of which one of them, once you understand their characteristics, no matter what it says, it is just: either they talk about emptiness – the inherited characteristic is purified; or they talk about subjective dependent-arising. The known reference of “ultimate nature of emptiness arises from understanding dependent-arising” – the ultimate nature – back and forth this is discussed in [all these three systems], you need to have faith in this concept of the ultimate nature of all phenomena. But for now [we are] contaminated. In order to purify, [we] have to rely on virtuous teacher, and relying on a virtuous teacher requires faith. In terms of arithmetic it is to say: “100% of the personal qualifications match up with 100% guidance from a virtuous teacher then it is possible to achieve 100% of your Buddhahood.” These two are the requirements: faith in confidence and faith in belief.

*[*The three Mahayana systems: checked with Monks they are Cittamatra-mind-only; Svatantrika and Prasangika 大乘三系可能是: 唯识, 中观自续, 中观应成。]*

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 22:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P51 L4]

In general, faith is of many types –

Now for the faith here - of course there are many varieties of faith.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P80; 18A, 22:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P51 L6]

faith in the three jewels, faith in karma and its effects, faith in the four noble truths. However, here we are speaking of faith in the guru.

This we know of, or they will be explained in detail later. What is [the faith] referred here? It is “faith in the guru” to have faith in the virtuous teacher that you rely on.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18A, 23:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P51 L9]

With regard to how disciples should view their gurus,

Next, the text says that it is correct to rely on a virtuous teacher, but how to have faith in him? This is not random or casual superstition, which is of no use. When we heard others say, “Ah! I have faith in my virtuous teacher!” How do you go about this faith? What do you have faith in? What is faith? Hey, these all have supporting reasoning behind them.

Understand clearly and comply accordingly in practicing each one of these. Otherwise, by saying, “Ah, as long as apply faith in belief than I have faith in him!” Sorry to point out, this is superstitious, which is of no use.

Buddhism does not speak of superstition; this will be clarified later. So how do we have faith? It tells us to:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18A, 23:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P52 L2]

the Tantra Bestowing the Initiation of Vajrapani (Vajrapaṇy-abhiṣeka-mahā-tantra) says:

This is in the Tantra teaching, the scripture of Tantra.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18A, 23:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P52 L4]

If you would ask, O Lord of Secrets, how disciples should view masters, then I would answer that they should view them just as they view the Bhagavan. If the disciples view their masters in this way, They will always cultivate virtues. They will become buddhas And benefit the entire world.

This Lord of Secrets is Bodhisattva Mahasthanaprata [Bodhisattva of Great Strength]. In the Tantra context, he is known as Vajrapani, the head of Vajrayana. So Buddha told him, “Well! When a disciple relies on a virtuous teacher, what should he do? View the virtuous teacher as Buddha. If you are able to do so mentally, then at all times your merits will multiply and Buddhahood will arise quickly. As for yourself, it is achieving Buddhahood, whereas for others,

the benefit will be worldly.” This part will wait to be explained in detail later. But we need to have faith in this concept; this quote is from the Tantra scripture. Sutrayana scriptures have already been cited many, many times before; they all deliver the same points. So regardless of whether it is Sutrayana or Tantrayana, they all teach us: as long as you can view the virtuous teacher as Buddha, you will receive the greatest benefit. Thus, in the earlier Hinayana story, the laywoman treated the older monk as someone who was perfectly flawless and, thus, she gained all the benefits.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18A, 25:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P53 L1]

In the Mahayana sutras as well it is taught that you must think of the guru as being the Teacher.

The previous one is from the Tantrayana, now it is the same with the Sutrayana teachings. So to rely on a virtuous teacher, view this virtuous teacher as Buddha. And even...

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18A, 25:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P53 L4]

***The Texts on Discipline* state this as well, and the meaning of their statements is as follows.**

The *Texts on Discipline* (Vinaya) is the sutra on ethical discipline. In fact, *the Texts on Discipline* is not only about ethical discipline. In other words, the fundamental teaching of Hinayana is the same. Thus regardless of whether it is the Hinayana, Mahayana, Sutrayana, or Tantrayana, they all say the same thing. Why is it so?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18A, 26:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P53 L7]

When you recognize someone to be a buddha, you will not discern faults in that person, and you will pay attention to his or her good qualities.

If you have this recognition within, then when you feel: ah! It turns out that you are actually relying on the Buddha. You will definitely not find faults in Buddha; you would only appreciate his good qualities. What benefits will this lead to? May I ask, when you are finding faults in others, even if it is truly his fault and even if your thought is correct, what benefits do you get from this? This is the real question! So you have to constantly remember: Well! Why do I come here? Am I here just like all the worldly people engaging in nonsensical talk or am I here to learn from Buddha? You have to clarify this erroneous perception. Once you are clear about it, regardless of how big a mistake the other party commits, you will definitely not think of the faults. Isn't it very clear? If he is better than you, you learn from him. And if he is not, you should help him. Isn't this simple? Why would you think of his faults?

[18A, 27:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P54 L2]

However, often due to our weighty latent propensity from beginningless time, we are apt to this reaction. We easily react in this way! When interacting with ordinary people, this may be barely acceptable. But now, with this person who is to guide you, this virtuous teacher – with this mentality toward your virtuous teacher, then your further practice on the path is finished! This is very clear. The cause for your lack of achievement is due to your lack of understanding of the reasoning. If you do not understand

the principles, you must rely on a virtuous teacher. To rely on a virtuous teacher, you must listen to him with one-pointed attention. If you develop negative thoughts toward your virtuous teacher, not only will you not be able to study, not to mention all the following steps. What is more is that you even may not accept Buddha Dharma. So the first step to apply the practice is to understand the principle of how to apply. To understand the principle of application, one must have a virtuous teacher. To rely on a virtuous teacher, you must remove obstacles between [you and him]. By then, you cannot look for any speck of flaws in him. Even if he has any, you should not pick on them, this is very important! This concept is very clear and, as I always say, nowadays we speak of many theories – well, this reasoning is tougher than others. The point is not to speak of theory; it is about whether or not you can actually apply it? If you are unable to do so, all this talk of theories will only harm you! Do you harm! This is the point.

[18A, 28:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P54 L13]

On the contrary, if you do not look for his faults and appreciate his good qualities, just contemplate on his merits. Regardless of what the virtuous teacher is doing, your merits will multiply. When he berates you, you will say, “Well, he is helping me to cultivate my patience!” When he scolds you, you should think, “Ah, removing my karmic obstacle, my weighty transgression is replaced by a less severe effect.” In the sutras, there are so many of these types of teachings written there. There were typical examples: due to the scolding by the virtuous teacher, he helped purify many of your negative karmic effects. Thus, no matter what he is doing, you will feel, wow, this is a peerless blessing to you, there are immeasurable merits. And your faith will increase. [You] may also say that the faith increases or you have

purified within, or your afflictive and cognitive obscurations are removed. Wouldn't this be the best? This concept is so simple, so obvious! Yet we don't realize it, what a pity! Now, with this recognition, be very happy and strive hard to achieve it!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18B, 00:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P57 L1]

Likewise, completely cast aside your conception of faults in the guru, and train yourself to discern the guru's good qualities.

Regarding your virtuous teacher, one must cast aside the entirety of the faultfinding directed toward him. To “search and examine” are two words. To search is coarser, and to examine is subtler. Examination is to watch and wait. When you notice one of his faults, this is the search; afterwards, the mind is still disturbed and keeps thinking about it. This is “watch and wait.” These are most detrimental to us; nothing else can be more harmful. If you have developed such habits at the causal stage, your fruitional effect will definitely be downfall – it is certainly depraved. If you develop such thoughts towards the virtuous teacher, downfall [to the miserable realms] is certain. Thereafter, the causally concordant effect [v1 p.236] – this causally concordant effect is the most serious effect. Upon your emergence from the hell realm, or however many cycles of the animal realm, etc., your latent propensity still remains. If you encounter a similar situation, you will still look for his faults. This is the case from beginningless time. Thus, if you don't correct it immediately, the transformation will never happen. If the transformation had happened, we would have become Buddhas long ago. Has Buddha ever denied us with blessings? So, here, this is what we need to

understand. Consequently, what should be done? Develop the attitude to observe merits – this is what it tells us. It uses this word, “train”, which is not mere theory. After listening to the theory, it relies on your practice to change yourself accordingly. That is, we have constantly made mistakes in the past and now we have heard and understood the instructions from the virtuous teacher, but we must rely on proper application of the teachings to truly reverse the erroneous tendencies.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18B, 01:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P58 L5]

That is, do as it states in the tantra cited above, the *Tantra Bestowing the Initiation of Vajrapani*:

Well! Once the concept is understood, abide by it! Next, the text says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18B, 01:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P58 L7]

Keep the masters' good qualities in mind

Never seize upon their faults.

Keeping their good qualities in mind, you will reach attainments.

Seizing upon their faults, you will not.

You should keep your teacher's – this teacher is whom you rely on his merits and his good qualities, instead of looking at his faults. By examining his good qualities, the achievement is yours. Whereas if you look upon his faults, there definitely will not be attainment, it will certainly lead to failure. So this *Praise of Mindfulness* should be constantly remembered: “My faults are as great as a mountain, yet I

cannot see.” One’s faults are greater than mountain Meru, yet [we] cannot see them. “The faults of the teacher as tiny as a dust particle, yet I clearly perceive.” For a small flaw of the teacher, as small as a tiny feather, is scrutinized by you very clearly. “The mind is not in concordance with Dharma due to this.” Constantly reflect on the fault of the self, “May I diligently confess and remember this well.” So we are not complying with the Buddha Dharma, why? The reason is stated here. How do we recognize our non-compliance with the teaching? Actually, it is the turbulent mind state – the chaotic confusion state – just like that; it is very clear and very obvious. “Diligently confess,” repent earnestly! Constantly keep this in mind.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18B, 03:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P59 L2]

Your guru might have good qualities for the most part, and have only slight faults.

If you examine your guru for those faults, this will block your own attainments.

That is to say, even if this virtuous teacher has good qualities that are much greater than yours, yet because you examine his faults, very sorry! You will not have the condition to learn from him – this is a self-inflicted obstacle. The greatest obstacle is right here. Once you watch for his faults, you are hopeless! Conversely,

[18B, 03:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P59 L6]

Whereas, even in the case of a guru who mostly has faults, you will give rise to your own attainments if you

train in faith by focusing on the good qualities while not looking for the faults.

Even if he has many flaws or even if he is far behind you and has far more faults than you, but, as long as you are not looking for [the faults] and instead you constantly observe his good qualities and cultivate your faith, this becomes your cause for attainment. There are no exceptions for both Hinayana and Mahayana, no exceptions! All stories and cases in our Sutras repeatedly explain the story like this one that we have just heard, right?

[18B, 04:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P59 L11]

Therefore, once someone is your guru, whether he or she has small or great faults, contemplate the disadvantages of examining for his or her faults. Repeatedly think about eliminating that tendency, and then stop it.

So, for all of our elders or teachers, this range can be a very wide perspective. Regardless of whether his faults are great or small, that is the time you should properly contemplate and say, “Ah! These are his faults! By examining his faults, the harm is brought onto me. Alas! [I should] not do so, never do this!” You should start from here as the first step to practice, this is the application [we] should apply. Then “repeatedly think about eliminating that tendency.” Try to eliminate it “and then stop it.” This is truly the immediate and primary point for practicing Mahayana teachings – the primary point.

[18B, 05:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P60 L5]

Even when the influence of factors such as an overabundance of afflictions or a lack of

conscientiousness leads you to conceive a fault in your guru, take pains to confess this and restrain yourself from ever doing it again.

Even if we understand and are ready to engage, however, the weighty afflictive tendencies from beginningless time still remain. This is the first [reason]. The second is when you sincerely want to overcome it with great conscientiousness and no laxity. With any laxity, that [afflictive] concept will return, it will arise again; that is laxity, and this tendency is very forceful. If you are careless, you will begin to find the teacher's faults, what should be done then? Make great effort – the only remedy is to endeavor to “restrain from doing it again.” This is why I often apply various approaches here, maybe explaining very calmly and reasonably reminding you that you should not engage in senseless talk or setting various rules. What is the purpose for this? At time of engaging in it, there are only two things: first fostering the enhancement of the affliction – engaging in senseless speech increases afflictions. Not to mention gossip or the like – even if you are not involved in any gossip – it is senseless speech and meaningless. If a dispute is involved, then who knows how much non-virtuous karma will be created. Even without [dispute], it is laziness – all beginningless tendencies are involved! This is why a true practitioner focuses full attention at [this tendency].

[18B, 06:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P61 L2]

People may say, “Well, we are just ordinary beings!” That's right, my feeling about this now is: it is precisely because you are an ordinary being that you must strive diligently! If you were already a sage, [you] could afford to slow down [on applying the practice]! Today you are an ordinary being, if this breath is your last one, you wouldn't

know where [you] would end up! By watching a burning fire approaching soon, [the sage] has already escaped, and he is outside [of the cyclic existence], resting for a while is fine. As for me now, I have not escaped yet. When will that wall fall, or when will the fire reach me – it could happen any time. If you are still using these words [that I am just an ordinary being] as excuse, you will only harm yourself! So this is the time to strive hard. Provided we are able to do so...

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18B, 07:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P61 L8]

Once you have done this, the influence of that conception will gradually diminish.

If you are able to apply accordingly, this power of affliction will slowly, gradually be reduced, and your practice will gradually advance. So as long as we have this mentality now, take heed! At that time, the best method is to earnestly work hard. By doing so, when you study too hard, take a break and rest. That will be the time for everyone to discuss, “Well, it was a great session just now, but here I go again.” Advise and encourage each other, instead of the old attitude of sitting there without anything better to do but talking about others, saying that they are all wrong and I am right. This mentality thus will be replaced and eliminated.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P81; 18B, 07:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P62 L1]

Moreover, pay attention to the good qualities that the guru does have — such as ethical discipline, learnedness, and faith —

and reflect on these qualities. Once you have become conditioned to this, you may notice that your guru has a small number of faults.

This is easy to understand. Even if you are contemplating his good qualities, that is fine, or you look at him and always think about... [You] may try to think about it this way, I will share with you a method that I have constantly done from the past up to now. If he [the teacher] has many flaws, yes it is true, what about me? Ha, not a bit less! Then why bother looking at others. Conversely, when we look at his good qualities, whatever he has that I am short of. Then you are on the right track! This should be the approach. Thus, you always have to see from this perspective, try to direct the mind toward looking at his merits and learn from him.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 08:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P62 L7]

However, this does not impede your faith because you are focusing on the good qualities.

If you can practice in this manner, even if there are any flaws – even if this teacher has some small speck of fault – because you only focus on his good qualities, you will not be obstructed – you would not have obstacles [learning from him]. Next, there is an example:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 08:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P62 L10]

For instance, although you see that there may be many good qualities in people whom you dislike, your strong perception of their faults overwhelms any perception of

their good qualities. Likewise, you might notice many faults in yourself, yet, if the perception of your good qualities is very strong, it overwhelms any perception of your faults.

For instance, for things that are not to your liking, even though they may have many benefits, because of your intense dislike, their benefits are blocked and [you are] unable to tolerate it. We can use an example or an analogy: when a child takes medicine, the medicine is definitely good for him. However, when he sees it, well, it is too bitter! He dislikes the bitterness, no matter how great the medicine is, he just won't take it, this is the case. So, no matter how beneficial it is to us, as long as you have this perception, what is the perception? It is the strong attitude of magnifying faults, which will prevent you from receiving the benefit. On the contrary, for us, even endowed with various faults, yet I just need to have one good quality – “self”. This “self” has the greatest merits, and you will not be able to see any [of your own] nonvirtues. Not to mention, with this self, toward our children and our significant others – the children are too innocent to know much. However, you feel that they are your loved ones, your own children; with this good quality present, you will not see any [of their] faults. This is a very obvious example.

[18B, 10:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P63 L9]

So the author tells us: you should earnestly meditate on the benefits of a virtuous teacher. Once you recognize the great advantage, even though he has minor flaws, these will not stop you [from respecting him]. By then we are prepared, this will be the time it will be good for us. The more you progress, the stronger this power [of reliance] will be.

Eventually, even for a terrible villain, you will not look for his flaws but only see his good qualities. You might say, is that so? Why not? Of course it is possible! Absolutely possible! Furthermore, there are no exceptions among all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, definitely so! How? All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have to fulfill all of the six perfections. Thus, our Buddha acted in this way: Devadatta harmed Buddha throughout many lifetimes, had Buddha ever perceived Devadatta harming him? Buddha only saw Devadatta's good qualities. When Devadatta came to ask for Buddha's head, eyes, and brain, [Buddha said]: "Alas! This is the opportunity to achieve my perfection of generosity." When Devadatta defamed [Buddha, Buddha said]: "This is for me to achieve the perfection of patience! For me to achieve the perfection of ethical discipline! And for me to achieve the perfection of joyous perseverance!" Isn't this the case? So in the beginning, do not practice on the faulty persons, rather, apply this to virtuous teachers who bring great benefit to you. Do this gradually until your practice becomes stronger, and you will naturally achieve this level one step at a time.

[18B, 11:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P64 L4]

So now we should not say, "Well! This Buddha Dharma, the Mahayana is what I want to learn, but it is too difficult!" Once you have applied the learning systematically, it is not hard at all. First apply the teachings on a virtuous teacher. Later, when your capacity has increased step-by-step, eventually you will be able to handle Devadatta and treat him like your virtuous teacher. Then you will achieve Buddhahood! This systematic order is so simple! Hence, to actually step on the path, at any given time, so long as you take this step forward - you must take every timely step forward. What is our next step now? What is the required

step now? It is the step toward the virtuous teacher. Once you take this step, at end, sacrificing the physical form is just one step away, still the same [step]. [Do you] understand this concept? When your mental capacity and recognition have been strengthened, at that time what needs to be done is still the same – just a little bit more.

[18B, 12:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P64 L11]

At the present time, due to our lack of this systematic order, and lack of complete understanding, [we] always think: “Well, this Buddha Dharma is so far away!” And also: “Alas, I am such an ordinary being!” Thus, though [we are] mentally inspired by Buddha Dharma, yet [we] sit there without any action. Now, with the true skillfulness of this Lamrim, well certainly, not only does it tell you that Buddha Dharma requires learning, now it tells you: toward the highest goal, your next step is this based on this present one. If you can follow these steps and advance gradually, in the end, it will still be one more step forward. Then you are succeeding! So the last statement [of this section]:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 13:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P65 L3]

Thus, it is similar to the following example. The great Elder held the Madhyamaka view and Ser-ling-ba held the view of a "true aspectarian" Cittamatrin. Therefore, Atisha's view was superior to that of Ser-ling-ba. Still, Atisha upheld Ser-ling-ba as the guru who was unrivaled amongst his gurus, because Atisha had obtained the spirit of enlightenment and a general presentation of the stages of the Mahayana path in dependence upon him.

Immediately, it cites an example here. Venerable Atisha had many teachers. But among them, who was most admirable? Venerable Ser-ling-ba. Hey, this is very interesting! Venerable Ser-ling-ba held the view of *Cittamatin, whereas his disciple [Atisha] had a superior view. Venerable Atisha held the *Madhyamaka view, which is the most thorough one. His teacher Venerable Ser-ling-ba held the Cittamatin view, which was inferior to the disciple's view. But this disciple, he obtained the essence, steps and Bodhichitta of Mahayana path - this is the center of Buddha Dharma, the most crucial part. This will be covered later and it will not be discussed here in detail. This [Bodhichitta] is very important, too important! Where did [Atisha] receive these Bodhichitta concepts? [It was] from Venerable Ser-Ling-ba, so, [Atisha] revered Venerable Ser-ling-ba as unrivaled among his gurus. Without any hesitation, Lama Tsong-kha-pa tells us here: the most perfect lineage was passed down from this source. This is a typical example in the lineage where the teacher is not equal to the disciple, well! However, this disciple treated the teacher as unrivaled among his gurus. As for us now, in case we do not understand this concept, and are unable to advance, then studying Buddha Dharma becomes a farce, and we would only harm ourselves. So upon hearing this section, please spend time to read more, listen more, contemplate more, and apply accordingly.

*[*Cittamatin/Cittamatra/Yogararin/Yogarcara: this school of thought is consciousness-only or mind-only - all Dharma are projections of one's own mind. Madhyamaka: this school of thought refers to a middle path that avoids the two extremes of eternalism – either eternal essence or annihilationism.]*

[18B, 14:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P66 L1]

We have discussed how to rely on a virtuous teacher. How should [we] rely? With regard to the motivation of relying on a virtuous teacher, in other words, what is the proper motivation, as well as what kind of preparation and behavior? With regard to the motivation, there are three parts. The first was discussed, the second has started, now let's continue. Look at the text:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 15:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P66 L6]

Reflect on your gurus' good qualities, and do not look for their faults. You must not discriminate among your gurus beginning with those from whom you have received one verse, even if they have such defects as faulty ethical discipline.

Toward the virtuous teacher, we need to cultivate this faith. This is to rely on the virtuous teacher, trust this virtuous teacher. Earlier, we covered the basic reasons to have faith in the virtuous teacher. In the beginning, it was first explained that, for sincere study of Buddha Dharma, the primal essence is faith. There is a saying, "Faith is the motherly source of good qualities, and it fosters all virtuous roots." This is especially true in Mahayana teachings. Whether the achievement is there or not, totally rely on virtuous teachers. Here it tells us how to cultivate faith toward great teachers, the trust in great teachers. Not only is it explained in great detail earlier, it even, well, just for a tiny speck of kindness, kindness of giving the teaching, we ought to be extremely respectful. Not to mention, what should we do with the teacher that we rely on?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 17:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P66 L13]

What should be the minimum? Even when you hear only one verse, just one passage – a verse is known as four statements – from the perspective of the recipient of the kindness of the verse, which is a very common matter. As for the person who delivers these four statements, even if he is unable to achieve it or has even transgressed... This is a comparison rather than an example. What are we comparing this with? This is to say that we should rely on the virtuous teacher – there should be complete reliance on the virtuous teacher – for the principle of study and the method for application. In addition, your concordant application and the experiential effect, etc., all need to rely on a qualified teacher. We will not discuss this for now. Even if he only told you one verse, as simple as that, one verse is four statements. What about this teacher? Although he himself did not apply this teaching yet, in such circumstances, you should still contemplate his good qualities and not his flaws. This is like Buddha encouraging us to do the same. Regarding this point, we may think: “Alas, this seems very hard, too difficult!” In fact, we would definitely have this feeling, “Well! Hum...He is not applying the teaching. His random talking, I can do that too! What is so special about it?” Why do we still have to respect him in this situation? Here lies the problem.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 19:25; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P67 L9]

So we first have to establish a standard: why am I here? I am here to learn from the Buddha. May [I] ask: is your learning from the Buddha to refine yourself or to transform

others? I want to improve myself because, once I can become Buddha, then I can help others. Is this concept clear? This applies to anybody, think it over; this is a very important concept. If you are really inspired to help others, the required condition is that you have to be able to support yourself. If you don't even have the ability to purify and clear away your afflictions, how can you help others? This concept is very obvious. To clear away afflictions relies on applying Buddha Dharma. Even with one word or one verse, as long as it works for you, he has helped you. How can [we] not be grateful and not respect him? His transgression and so forth is his own issue. Let's step away from Buddha Dharma now and take the worldly cases, where we can get accurate answers very quickly. May [I] ask: in our progression to this day, if it were not for the unconditional kind upbringing of our parents, would we have been able to become what we are today? There is no exception, it is not possible; no one is exempt, it is not possible. Even for more advanced animals, at a young age, they rely on the care of their parents. Only the lesser animals can survive without parents. May [I] ask, are these parents sages? No, most of our parents are not sages – they are all ordinary beings. In addition, many parents have made a lot of mistakes – would you blame them for their mistakes? Or would you appreciate their kindness? This concept is very clear, very obvious. What caused his downfall to become the animal? It is because [some animals] do not know to appreciate the kindness [of parents], and regard [parents] from a negative angle.

[18B, 21:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P68 L7]

If you look at it from a negative angle, the karmic deeds you are accumulating are totally negative. Others may show

you great kindness yet you only see the negative side. Well, Buddha did not create this teaching of dependent arising, Buddha discovered it, and the same applies to worldly conditions - this is how the law of cause and effect functions: if you can see it from a positive angle, you will receive positive effects. If you ignore the good side and only see the negatives, naturally you are due to suffer. So now parents devoted their effort on you – the child - for their entire lifetime and you respond by telling them, “You are an ordinary being, and you are not a sage.” This type of ludicrous attitude will lead you to fall to hell! Now this teacher has nurtured your Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life. He has given you his understanding of the teachings and you are inspired to achieve Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life, this is just the time to strive for self-purification. How can you not be grateful to him? This is a very simple concept. If you blame him and you apply Buddha Dharma to condemn him, then you are wrong from the very beginning, far from being right! If you have some understanding of Buddha Dharma, you will only appreciate him, never blame him. If you lack the understanding and you blame him, you are totally outside the scope of Buddha Dharma. That is the attitude of a worldly being; and you don't even need to judge him from the perspective of Buddha Dharma. Isn't this a very simple concept?

[18B, 22:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P69 L3]

Theoretically, this is how it works. And how do we apply this in reality? Yes, we want to learn from Buddha, what about Buddha? At the causal stage, not only did Buddha serve and pay respect to his virtuous teachers in various ways, there were many times when the demon approached him just to deliver a verse. But the demon's conditions were very cruel: “Alas! This Buddha Dharma is very precious and

it can't be handled carelessly!" What should be done? [The demons] requested various cruel conditions, one of which was: "On your body, light one thousand lamps." How does one light lamps on the body? Dig a hole in the body and pour oil into the flesh, and then insert the lamp wick to light it up. If it were for us, to burn one stick of incense on the body, we would clench our teeth to endure the unbearable pain, just like that. For those stronger ones, to endure three burning sticks of incense [on the body, the way some Buddhists show their devotion], if they don't feel the pain, it is considered very tough. Actually, when the incense is applied, the tip has already been burned, right? A raw stick of incense would be even more unbearable for us. Now Buddha actually dug a hole and poured oil into it, and had a total of one thousand of these holes. Buddha never said, "You demons, you are such a villain, who are you to lecture me!" Instead, Buddha was extremely grateful. The cause of Buddha's achievement lies here, for he completely resolved his afflictive issue, and he will also help us to thoroughly resolve ours.

[18B, 24:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P69 L14]

Now let me apply this to myself, everyone might as well ask yourself: what am I doing? To learn from Buddha, well, this is a typical example. The aforementioned concept is very clear. With this example vividly in front of us – so do you want to learn from Buddha, or do you want to take an opposite path? This concept is obvious. So for now, we should continue to hold on to this principle: the correct view is the priority. Next, it refers to the Sutra for validation.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 18B, 24:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P70 L3]

For the *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* (Ratna-megha-sutra) states:

When you rely on the guru, your virtue increases and your non-virtue decreases. Understanding this, develop the idea that your abbot is the Teacher whether he or she is greatly or slightly learned, is knowledgeable or not, or has kept ethical discipline or faulty discipline. Just as you have a liking for and faith in the Teacher, so too you should have a liking for and faith in the abbot. Develop reverence for your masters and serve them.

Let's review this section first. It is referring to the quote from the Sutra: if you precisely understand [the teaching], hear the teachings properly, and apprehend the true benefit of relying on a virtuous teacher, then the situation will be different. What are the benefits of relying on virtuous teachers? "Your non-virtue decreases" – the non-virtues will gradually and gradually be reduced. These non-virtues refer to our ignorance, afflictions, or so-called "delusions." That is to say that the wrong views will decrease as we recognize the true nature of reality, and our non-virtuous karma or contaminated deeds will also reduce. So at a causal stage, we need to know that it does not mean that, by relying on virtuous teacher, all of a sudden the happy effect will appear. The cause and effect in Buddha Dharma is different from the worldly perception. The true greatness of Buddha Dharma is to point out the laws of cause and effect of dependent arising – as long as you do it right at causal stage, the favorable effect will naturally arise. Thus, to rely on a virtuous teacher does not mean to have food, drinks, fun, and play; not like that. To rely on a virtuous teacher is to obtain proper knowledge and apply accordingly, to purify our wrong view and conceited perceptions, in order to attain

correct knowledge and correct view. Thereafter, it should be followed by our actual deeds to comply with the purified correct knowledge and view. With these pure virtuous deeds, the effects will be perfect in the future. Thus, to sum it up, this is where “non-virtue decreases.”

[18B, 27:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P71 L2]

Upon your true understanding of this point, regardless of which abbot-master – this is often known to us as a monk, the one who can truly inspire our Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life, which is very important. Normally, we refer to this as monk-of-precepts, the monk who guides us with precepts. In a monastery, when the abbot is addressed as a monk, it has a special meaning – this is the abbot-master. Regardless of whether or not this abbot-master is endowed with the wealth of knowledge – he has a wide range of knowledge – whether he knows very little or whether he has profound wisdom, and whether he upholds or transgresses on the precepts; no matter what, we should view him as the Great Being. This Great Being is Buddha. Just like we entrust ourselves to Buddha single-pointedly and venerate him with mindful inspiration without any contaminated emotions, this should be the same way we pay respect to our abbot-master. This applies to [our] discipline-masters as well - serve them with equivalent respect. The discipline-master is our teacher; there are usually five types of teachers. For example, at our ordination, one of them is the abbot-master, and the other is the discipline-master.

[19A, 00:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P75 L1]

At the ordination ceremony for novice monks, the proper method requires two [teachers]. The ordination includes bestowing of precepts and instructions; thus one [teacher] bestows the precepts, the other gives instructions. Moreover, there is the scripture instructor [also known as acharya]. In ancient times, the transmissions of scriptures were done with great caution. In addition, there is also the reliance teacher. In general, there are five [kinds of teachers]. After ordination, before we actually understand and become adept at the teachings, we must not depart [from these teachers], must never leave [them]. Under this circumstance, that is why, well! Regardless of whether it is the abbot or any of the teachers, we respect and serve them as the Buddha. If you can venerate the abbot and our reliance and scripture teachers in this manner, then regardless of the state of this teacher, your Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life will increase – that is enhancing your potential Buddha nature.

[19A, 01:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P75 L8]

In the mundane world, we Chinese have a saying, "Filial piety is the chief of all virtues" - amongst all virtues, filial piety is the primary one. Moreover, there are widely circulated texts such as the *Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution* (感应篇), *The Articles of the Unpublished Merits* (陰鷲文), etc. These were widely prevalent in China for thousands of years. There are many classical stories in these books that illustrate this – the stories would start out by saying at a certain place there was a filial son, who was blessed by deities and so forth – actually, these stories illustrate cause-and-effect. Those people who are truly filial will, in return, receive the best tribute of the mundane world. Now, we wish to enhance our

Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life, where does this come from? It comes from the Teachers. So the Teachers are the parents of our Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life. Toward your worldly parents who nurtured your physical form during this lifetime, if you either harm or respect and have gratitude towards them, it will produce great non-virtuous and virtuous effects, respectively. Now, with respect to the parents of [our] Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life, you can imagine that by applying any tiny bit of virtuous or non-virtuous actions, the resulting comparable effects will be extremely serious, extremely weighty!

[19A, 02:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P76 L7]

Thus, upon our true understanding of this point, regardless of how terrible the teacher is, we will still view him as the Buddha. The reason that we are not able to do so is still due to our own ignorance. Nowadays, many people often say: "What is so great about him? Why should I pay him respect?" When one says this, he would seem quite pleased with himself – as though arrogance were good. But in fact, this person is very pitiful and foolish! If the one who made this comment truly has the wisdom to understand a bit more, regardless of how great the teacher is, or even if the teacher is totally incompetent, I will still pay the teacher boundless respect. If you are able to do so, the merits are yours. He can't take it away from you - the credit is not his! This concept has been repeatedly explained before. So the reason why we need to constantly contemplate and analyze is right here [merits are accumulated via veneration]. You must be continuously mindful and vigilant of the proper perception. When the proper perception manifests in your mind, upon encountering the external condition, you will naturally act according to the proper perception. It will be put

to use as you commit the karma. In other words, you have created virtuous and uncontaminated karma. Conversely, if your mind does not function this way and instead, you are engrossed with afflictions, thinking: "Well! What is so great about this person? I am much better than him!" If you really think it this way, then when the condition arises, you will definitely pursue non-virtue. In the end, while we don this robe yet behave in this manner, then there is only one direction — to fall into the miserable realms; that is it: down fall to the unfortunate realms!

[19A, 04:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P77 L3]

So now, I sympathize with many fellow practitioners who view others with this kind of attitude. Because I used to have this tendency, well! I would feel that I have traveled all over the world, but I have not found one person that is worth a glance. Not to mention my gazing at him. Now that I reflect on it, I see that I am totally wrong and mistaken. Who knows how far off I was. Up until now, I still regretfully confess! This tendency is very difficult to change! Hence, I specifically explain it here. If we can respect others, eventually the benefit is still ours. Because, once you have been benefited, later on, you will naturally repay others. That is the time to help others. When you successfully bring these two [respecting others and helping others] to perfect completion, you are Buddha. This not only applies to ordinary beings, let alone for those who have benefited [us] with the Dharma teaching. This is even the case if someone has only given us a four-line verse, much less toward our teachers. Now with this understanding, next the text is telling us that there are still more benefits!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 19A, 05:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P77 L10]

Think that you will complete the collections that lead to enlightenment and eliminate the afflictions that you still have in dependence on this.

What is our greatest difficulty in studying and applying Buddha Dharma now? It is that [our] obscurations have not been cleared away and merits have not been accumulated. So, the afflictions that have not been cleared away need to be cleared away. After eliminating them, we attain the good quality that arises from the elimination of afflictions - the merits attained by the elimination of afflictions. For those aspired accumulations of merits - in other words, wisdom merit and compassion merit. As for now, how nice! If you can serve and respect your teachers with this causal condition, for the "collections that lead to enlightenment" that have yet to be perfected, "you will complete" them. This Lamrim text is never ambiguous - the word "complete" does not mean that you just accumulate a small portion. In the text, it states clearly that the complete collections can be perfected. This source in the Lamrim text is not from commentary but from the Sutra. In other words, it is clearly stated in the sutras. In the Vajrayana teachings, this point is explicitly explained. In the Paramitayana practices, most people do not emphasize this point. Actually, this sutra is from Mahayana's Paramitayana section. It is the *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* of the Tripitaka [Three Scriptural Collections]. You may want to read it yourself.

[19A, 07:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P78 L5]

In the Vajrayana, it speaks of "achieving Buddhahood in one lifetime." It is different from Zen Buddhism's "penetrating the true nature of reality and achieving Buddhahood." The latter is seeing Buddha-nature, which is the state of the Path-of-Seeing. At this state of the Path-of-Seeing, the beginner's Buddha-nature and the final stage of completion of the Buddhahood, the thoroughness of Buddha nature is the same – identical with exactly the same quality - yet the quantitative measurement is different. In the Vajrayana, the so-called "achieving Buddhahood in one lifetime" is at a higher level, much higher, a lot higher. It does not necessarily refer to the perfectly complete Buddha, who is the worldly venerated Shakyamuni. He is the worldly Revered One. Shakyamuni is complete in benefitting self and others. In fact, attainment in the Vajrayana teachings is to be complete in benefitting the self. In the *Lotus Sutra*, it says: "the worldly Revered One Shakyamuni had already achieved Buddhahood countless eons ago." The achievement then could have been Buddhahood complete in benefitting the self. In other words, he had already removed the two obscurations [obstruction of afflictions and obstruction of knowledge]. But the many good qualities of how to induce others may not have been complete. So thereafter, he continued to dwell in cyclic existence. Buddha never passed into nirvana and will forever work to save sentient beings from cyclic existence. When these beings are endowed with sufficient causes and conditions, he will manifest again as Buddha. He will repeatedly manifest and show the process of attaining Buddhahood. Just like that.

[19A, 08:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P78 L15]

So why is the achievement so easily accomplished in Vajrayana? It is due to the premise of serving the virtuous

teacher. This is clearly expounded in sutras. Hence, there is a story in *the Biography of Venerable Milarepa*, which was on this topic. This situation is explained in more detail in the Vajrayana teachings. There is such great benefit [to relying on the teacher]! This benefit is so huge that if I were to do everything myself, alas, it would be unbelievably difficult! I would have to give away countless bodies, eyes, heads and marrow. Of course [to rely on a teacher] is not that easy either. Just because you had heard two or three phrases, don't think that's all [about Buddha's teachings]. When you earnestly complete the study of entire Lamrim text; moreover, if you feel you have what it takes, at that time you can consider learning the Vajrayana teachings. That is when the true understanding of these statements [from the above quote of *Cloud of Jewels Sutra*] will arise. However, for now, we need to first obtain proper recognition of how relying on the virtuous teacher has such great benefits! Other than the *Cloud of Jewels Sutra*, the *Array of Stalks Sutra* is the most classical example of this. Many Mahayana scriptures have similar explanations. But because we don't usually have in-depth study of the collections of scriptures, so [Lama Tsongkha-pa] specifically clarifies it here. Thus, for the afflictions that remain, you can "eliminate the afflictions that you still have" – they can be removed completely. Wow! This benefit is incredibly great! Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 19A, 10:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P79 L10]

Then you will obtain pleasure and joy. With respect to virtue act in accord with the gurus' words, but do not act in accord with the gurus' words with respect to nonvirtue.

For the above idea, if you understand it, then that is great! Wow, we are filled with incredible "pleasure and joy"! When your heart is filled with incredible pleasure, you cannot help but feel "joy" – waving your hands and dancing with joy, just like that! [We would be] unable to control [our] matchless and genuine joy. Our displeasure now is due to our minds are filled with afflictions and do not accord with the teachings. Since we accord with afflictions, thus even with the slightest ... what was meant to be something virtuous, you perceive it as non-virtuous; and then it would be harmful. Therefore we usually accord with non-virtue! With this understanding, he will abide by virtue instead of the non-virtue. Now it is because we do not understand, that we accord with non-virtue. We all accord with non-virtuous actions. Exactly what are these non-virtuous actions? They are our views, namely our ignorance; yet we feel quite right about it, "Well! This guy is acting strangely for no reason, why should I pay him respect?" Sigh, Amitabha Buddha, I am the one who wants to learn from Buddha! If I do not respect him, then who else would I respect? We must respect everyone; this is what we should know.

[19A, 11:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P80 L6]

By the way, [I] will mention it here in passing. Truly skillful instructions are endowed with these advantages. It is not to force you to practice a principle that is very difficult to do. Alas, asking you to accomplish something extremely difficult, not so! It specifies the reasoning of the given task ahead of time. It will first tell you "If you do this what are the benefits, and if you don't do this, what are the disadvantages." Once you understand the principles of how to do it as well as the benefits of doing so and disadvantages of not doing so, then naturally, it becomes easier and simpler for you to engage in

it! Thus, when you actually practice it, the sequence of the stages will be very specific. It will not ask you to accomplish the most difficult task all at once, but instead, it will ask you to practice beginning from the easier ones [first]. Once you have completed the easier tasks, you will come to realize: "Ah! It is absolutely right, so it is very true! My previous understandings were incorrect. Now with this proper perception, it turns out there are these great benefits!" Thus the more you practice, the more joyous you would feel.

[19A, 13:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P80 L14]

What would your state of mind be at that time? Well, you will spontaneously adjust your attitude toward either your previous incorrect views or lack of understanding. At that time you will feel: "Alas, how confusing! In the past, I always thought this was right or that was right, but actually they were my afflictive-view and afflictive-sentiment in the midst of ignorance!" The first thing that happens is that your reliance on "the self" can be gradually purified and reduced. This egoistic self is the root of cyclic existence! Normally when one is asked to remove the egoistic self without knowing the cause, it is absolutely impossible. Yet now, skillful means can be applied. If you remove it without knowing the reason, pressuring yourself to do it will bring suffering. Ah, if you understand the reasoning, even though the process may be arduous, you will taste the sweetness [of your cultivation]. The more difficult it is, the sweeter it is! That is how it works. In this case, obstacles are gradually reduced and your abilities will gradually increase. This is how it works! Thus, advancing step by step, unknowingly, you become aligned with the Buddha Dharma.

[19A, 14:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P81 L7]

If this [skillful instruction] is not available, then what would happen? Often we always speak of a profound concept. When we talk about it, everybody seems to know, "Well! Buddha!" What is Buddha? "[He is one who] benefits self and others; one who enlightens self and others. He is perfectly enlightened!" Hey! The description is completed in two sentences. At the time of application, there is always [this mentality], "Alas, Amitabha Buddha! I am only an ordinary being. How do you expect me to do this?" With any small thing, you push it far away as though it was a rocket in space. Although you speak as though you know what is going on, in actuality, you are just marching on the same spot, not going anywhere. Marching on the same spot is considered not that bad, at least one is willing to march! One may prostrate to the Buddha or chant the Buddha's name: "Wow! Every day I have prostrated to the Buddha so many times; I have recited Buddhas' name so many times daily and recited so many sutras, I do this and that...I can meditate without having to lie down to sleep." Well! The afflictions have not budged one bit.

[19A, 15:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P81 L14]

Now, this is not the case here, it distinctly and clearly explains the concept and sequential stages to you. Maybe you are not at the level of meditating without having to lie down, or perhaps you have not prostrated to the Buddha even once, but deep down inside, once you know clearly, then at that time you will venerate sincerely. Ah, you will pay immeasurable respect to the Buddha and offer peerless praise! If you see Buddha's image and you proceed to

prostrate, this will produce incredible power. At that time, you will know it yourself. Even before prostrating to the Buddha, your heart would be filled with joy! Thus, when you stay within the Sangha community, you will experience the beauty of the Sangha community in every aspect without any exception - everything [within the Sangha community] gives you opportunities to purify afflictions and increase your merits. Where does it begin? It begins right here – the proper perception. Therefore, what is most important for us now is to have this recognition. Next, the text continues to quote from the sutra.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P82; 19A, 16:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P82 L6]

Also the Questions of Householder Ugra Sūtra (Gṛhapaty-ugra-paripṛcchā-sūtra) says:

O householder, some bodhisattvas strive diligently at receiving oral transmissions of teachings and doing recitations. They might have masters from whom they have heard teachings, obtained oral transmission, or absorbed a verse of four lines that contains a teaching on generosity, ethical discipline, patience, joyous perseverance, meditative stabilization, and wisdom, or the accumulation of the collections of the bodhisattva path. They should respect them because of these teachings.

The author quotes from another sutra, saying now this Bodhisattva – those who wish to train on the Bodhisattva path will be seeking “oral transmissions of teachings” and “doing recitations.” To recite, first [we] need to know how and the principles of it. Under these circumstances, regardless of from whom or what aspect of the teaching was heard, it doesn’t matter whether the content was on

generosity, ethical disciple the Six Perfections, and so on – in summary, these are all “the accumulation of the collections of the Bodhisattva path.” No matter what the content is, as long as it accords with the teachings even if it is as little as "a verse of four lines" - usually, when we refer to a verse of four lines, there is a reason - a verse embodies a complete concept. As long as one has listened to a complete concept, then that should be righteous! It is for you to accumulate the provisions for the Bodhi path.

[19A, 18:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P83 L1]

Thus, this verse of four lines does not necessarily mean that it has to be four lines. For example, the great masters in China may use the colloquial language of two or three lines, yet these great teachers actually provided authentic content that would enable you to have a breakthrough and guide you to advance forward. That is the logic [behind the verse of four lines], just like that. Sometimes, without even saying anything, [the teacher] picks up a stick, yells at you and strikes you with the stick. Well, from that, you could have a breakthrough and that is it! This is the most important aspect of this reference. So, under these circumstances, "they should respect them because of these teachings", one must respect and venerate [the teacher], what should be done? [Abide by] the teachings, this is the only way to repay [him]. If you can properly abide by the teachings to respect and venerate, then miraculously, your *Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life will be enhanced!

*[*Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life: refers to our Dharma-form lives on wisdom]*

[19A, 19:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P83 L8]

Thus now in many instances, I always specifically remind [everyone] that in the beginning, although our goal is Buddhahood and Buddha has totally removed this “egoistic self” – but when we learn Buddhism, it is not about merely uttering the word “selflessness” verbally. When you keep repeating and speaking of selflessness, your mind will be terrified. Alas, this “self” is so huge and for you to get rid of it causes unbearable suffering! No, it is not like that. In the beginning, [the teacher] will help [you] set the proper goal, and then be considerate of you in all aspects. Well! Once you have obtained the correct view, you will discover that the best way to be genuinely considerate of yourself is heading this direction. Consequently, you would engage in it with more and more vigor. When you engage in it with more and more vigor, the “self” will comparably shrink, and then your ability to align with the teaching will gradually increase. At that time, removing the “self” becomes very easy! All proper instructions have this characteristic. Therefore when we normally speak, listen, and so on, if it is meant to plant a seed, then any instruction is excellent and worthy of praise. However, for in-depth [study] it involves a judgment of standard. So, next it says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19A, 20:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P84 L2]

The bodhisattvas might serve and venerate these masters without deceit. They might do so with all forms of gifts, respect, and worship for eons equal in number to the words, sentences, and letters in the verses that they were taught. Yet, still, O householder, they have not developed the respect for these

masters that a master deserves. Since that is the case, what need is there to mention improper expressions of respect?

This says, look at how many teachings have been imparted to you by the teacher. If these many teachings have been imparted, you then for example, if one segment was explained, then you will need to do this in return for one eon; if it was two segments or if you go by measuring the timeframe; if he has said a few things to you, you will need to do this for such long eons of time, doing what? [You will need] to offer and venerate him. And how would you need to offer and venerate? [It needs to be done] "without deceit" and "do so with all forms of gifts, respect, and worship." This "without deceit" in your mind is definitely not the feeling of being taken advantage of. "Deceit" is actually appearing to be respectful externally while plotting something else in the mind. No! From the depths of your heart, you wholeheartedly want to venerate and offer. This is the mental aspect. With regards to action - "with all forms" - under any circumstances, you will make offerings with all kinds of things. But to make such an offering and veneration is still not enough. Why? If you are not aligned to the teachings, then you will fall short of repaying the true kindness that the teacher has shown you. Not to mention if we pay improper respect! Now, let us not even talk about improper respect, as at the present time, we cannot begin to claim we have respect, whereas we use the teachings to slander our teachers - we apply the teachings to harm our teachers. This is how we are! This is truly a grave mistake. Hence, now we often feel that: "Alas, the [condition of learning] is not perfect!" This is nothing but our own non-virtuous causes that have issued the current non-virtuous effect.

[19A, 22:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P85 L2]

However, we are very fortunate! Although, we cannot compare our time with the Age of Buddha's actual teachings, or the Age of Semblance teachings; yet within the degenerate time we are at the top, the cream of the crop. This is absolutely true, very true indeed. Therefore, with regards to this, we should congratulate ourselves, feel fortunate and work hard! Take advantage of the opportunity during this degenerate time, especially during the conditions of the degenerate time, to not only become ordained but also be able to hear such quintessential teachings. I believe that many of us here share this common feeling: "Although [I] have heard many brilliant teachings, I am still not able to apply accordingly!" But for what we have now, why is it so excellent? Well, these principles are logical and well reasoned. And then when you apply them, you can advance step by step! Furthermore, there are so many facts validating what the sutras say and what the great teachers say. The conduct of the great Masters was revealed in every aspect to give you very solid evidence, reasoning and ways to apply. Therefore, from this perspective, we should feel incredibly fortunate and strive to advance on the path!

[19A, 23:49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P85 L10]

So, this section covered: when we rely on virtuous teacher what the proper mental recognition, mental preparation, and the types of mental cultivation we should engage in – the subjective aspects [that we should have] in our minds. [It tells us] how to adjust our past mistakes - how to eliminate erroneous latent propensities - as well as how

to enhance proper recognition and constantly enhancing it. The second section is about training in faith.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19A, 24:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P86 L1]

C) Remembering the teacher's kindness and being respectful.

Other than the aforementioned training in faith towards the virtuous teacher, next it teaches us to remember his kindness. There is a special benefit for so doing. When you are mindful of his kindness, you will spontaneously generate gratitude, respect, and faith towards him. Therefore, this is why the mundane world speaks of filial piety. Of course, filial piety has all kinds of benefits. There are two ways in which it exhorts us: one of them is, parents benefited us so much, wow! When you think of all the benefits, you will unknowingly and wholeheartedly love, venerate, and respect them. This is one way. Another way is to tell you the laws of cause and effect in this world. It tells you that there are all these benefits for you if you do this. So it always comes down to this! Thus, we often say: "first inspire with the *hook of inspiration, then guide by the wisdom of the Buddha." This is truly the first inspiration! However, there is a sequential order. The first step of aspiration the hook of inspiration is common to the mundane world, something you can see. Now here it refers to the spiritual aspect - the mental hook of inspiration. This is where Buddha Dharma arises from, right? So now, as we sit here and listen, it is very clear and obvious, ah, so it has great benefits for us! We should not overlook this "hook of inspiration." It has embedded profound meaning. Thus, we should be mindful of his kindness - remembering his kindness.

*[*Hook of inspiration: the method to trigger our aspiration for spiritual advancement]*

[19A, 26:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P86 L12]

Next, the author talks about remembering teacher's kindness. I will not explain this next part of the text in detail. In general, we can take this from two perspectives. First is what we can see and feel presently such as our parents. Well, we might as well take a closer look: if we now need to give any small nice thing to others, oh, we are extremely reluctant in our minds! Not to mention giving away our possessions to others, even when we see others take a bit more, [we] would grumble. Whereas what about [our] parents? Hey! They would save all the good things for their children to eat. What thing did not come from our parents? With this in mind, how can you not be grateful to your parents? And then, when we undertake some trivial task, alas! We would always feel that we have done way too much – while others are having fun. Parents are not like that at all. [They] would let their children play, and do all the hard work themselves. After they are done working, [they] have to make money, well! Hurry up and buy a toy for the baby to play with. And what about us? This is one perspective of remembering his kindness – to view it from the effect stage in the immediate present.

[19A, 27:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P87 L6]

The other perspective is to look at the causal stage. Let's take a look: once you are able to appreciate the kindness of your parents and repay their kindness, with the planting of this cause of yours. Later, the karmic effect that you will obtain will be incredibly huge! Doesn't everyone want to

make money now? And this earning here refers to Dharma wealth. So for your routine tasks, it is painstaking to accumulate merits. However, if you can repay the kindness of your parents and carry it out accordingly, wow, that effect will be incredible! Now, repaying the kindness of the parents of the un-manifested inconceivable aspect of Buddha in this way, wow, the [karmic effect] is even more immeasurable! Who are these parents? They are [our] Teachers. Therefore, the sutras have explained this in many aspects by telling us that the blissful merits from offerings made to the Teachers are unexcelled. The effect produced from offerings made to the Buddha is even less than the offerings made to the Teachers. This is specifically explained in the Mahayana sutras.

[19A, 28:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P87 L12]

We may not be able to comprehend this: "This Buddha is perfect, whereas the teacher is an ordinary being. How can the merits of offerings made to the Teacher be greater than offerings made to the Buddha?" This requires explanation. If you do not have the proper understanding and offer to the Teacher as though he is an ordinary being, then the effects will not arise. Of course, there will still be some benefits, but it will not be greater than offerings made to the Buddha. Once you have proper understanding and you regard him as the Buddha, since he is your teacher and you offer with this mentality, these merits will certainly be greater than offerings made to the Buddha. Furthermore, this is not stated in the common sutras, but in the Mahayana-Definitive sutras. This will be validated later.

[19B, 00:14 Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P89 L1]

So I just used the worldly standard to explain: for your average kind deed, the karmic effect is not great. However, if you are filial toward or harm your parents, well, the effects are incredibly powerful! This is the case with worldly parents, and the same applies to our Dharma parents. As for this concept, it will be specified later in the karma section, it will be specifically explained. So now let us take a look, this is a very skillful means to help us – to be mindful of others' kindness. Now, let us read the text.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 00:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P89 L5]

The *Ten Teaching Sūtra* says:

Develop the following ideas with respect to your teachers. I have wandered for a long time through cyclic existence, and they search for me;

We have been in the long dark night of ignorance, continuously wandering in cyclic existence, who comes to search for us? The virtuous teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 00:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P89 L7]

I have been asleep, having been obscured by delusion for a long time, and they wake me;

We have always been obscured by this long dark night of ignorance; it is the virtuous teacher who comes to wake me up.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 01:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P90 L1]

they pull me out of the depths of the ocean of existence;

We have been drifting up and down in the ocean of cyclic existence, and they come to save us.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 01:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P90 L3]

I have entered a bad path, and they reveal the good path to me; they release me from being bound in the prison of existence; I have been worn out by illness for a long time, and they are my doctors; they are the rain clouds that put out my blazing fire of attachment and the like.

Think of it this way: Ah! There is no exception – all benefits and advantages come from virtuous teacher. This kindness is incredible, immeasurable and boundless! In what manner did the virtuous teacher benefit you with his kindness? By explaining the proper teachings to you; for this reason, even if it is a verse of four lines, as long as you hear it and apply accordingly, then the benefit is yours. Thus, whether he has faulty discipline or not, or whatever else, does it matter? That is the concept. We may say that: "Ah, now having listened to this instruction is great! But many [teachers] have yet to obtain the teachings in their entirety." Sorry, but it is not that he does not have the entire obtainment; it is our lack of virtuous roots and our insufficient good qualities! So, if you are able to abide by the teachings to purify afflictions and increase the merits, at this state, regardless of whether you randomly recite with others *the Array of Stalks Sutra* or the *Diamond Sutra*, upon

chanting it, you will be enlightened, right? That is the way it should be!

[19B, 02:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P90 L13]

So upon thinking of it here, you should realize, why is it that we often cannot comprehend the sutra? It is still due to our own obstacles. Hence, once you understand this, strive to purify even at risk of your own life! Now, instead of purifying, you are actually increasing your own obstacle, isn't this absurd? So, regardless ... once you truly understand, have properly comprehended it, then, no matter at what level of understanding, it will be very clear and very obvious. This is why Sung-pu-wa was mentioned earlier, well! Wherever he went, even if it were a layperson explaining the teachings, ah, he would go to listen, why? Because Sung-pu-wa benefited from the taste of the Dharma and he reflected on the kindness of the teaching. Now, we listened and listened but it is still flavorless. It is not that the teachings were explained poorly; Buddha's speeches are flawless. It is due to our weighty afflictions! This is what we should properly recognize. Next, it continues to say:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 03:41; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P91 L6]

Also the Array of Stalks Sūtra says: Youthful Sudhana,

Look! "Mindfully," you will weep. Why did [Youthful Sudhana] weep? After he read the text, what followed? [He] followed the personal instructions of the virtuous teacher. These personal instructions accord with the teachings. With this thought, well, what a mistake to not abide by the

virtuous teachers! Now hearing the teachings from virtuous teachers, how joyous! Hence, this is known as the "mixture of sorrow and joy," which is inevitable [reaction when the virtuous root is initiated]. Next,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 04:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P91 L10]

the teachers are those who protect me from all miserable realms; they cause me to know the sameness of phenomena; they show me the paths that lead to happiness and those that lead to unhappiness; they instruct me in deeds always auspicious; they reveal to me the path to the city of omniscience; they guide me to the state of omniscience; they cause me to enter the ocean of reality's sphere; they show me the sea of past, present, and future phenomena; and they reveal to me the circle of the noble beings' assembly. The teachers increase all my virtues. Remembering this, you will weep.

The text will not be explained in detail here. However, upon completing the discussion of this treatise, you should revisit it again and to clarify and understand it clearly - it should be very explicit. Here, I just it and all you have to do is to abide by this systematic order. If you can, listen attentively, contemplate well after listening, and apply accordingly upon contemplation. Then, naturally, each of us will become like the Youthful Sudhana, "mindfully" following the personal instructions of virtuous teachers and weeping. Thereafter, advancing one step at a time, ah, how joyful! This will be the effect. Thus, the text follows:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 05.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P92 L6]

Recollect your teacher's kindness in accordance with this statement.

We should follow what Youthful Sudhana stated earlier. We also follow the meaning of the teaching accordingly, uphold it in [our] minds, and recollect mindfully. What should we do differently?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 05:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P92 L9]

Personalize it by replacing "they" with "these teachers" in all of the phrases describing the teachers' kindness.

Each phrase can be said this way: ah! All virtuous teachers are like this – protecting me from cyclic existence, they come to save me. I have been in the midst of long nights of suffering, and they have come to save me. I have been burning by the blazing fire of afflictions, and they quench it with rain clouds. I want to advance to the omniscience of the Buddha Realm, and he gives me direction and escorts me, enabling me to enter the ocean of reality's sphere, enabling me to understand all Buddha Dharma, and enabling me to reach the abode of noble beings. Oh, you may not understand the statement "they reveal to me the circle of the noble beings' assembly." This "circle", when translated into Chinese is called "mandala", which "reveals" the place where the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas reside, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas stay in that place. In other words, well! Abide by the teaching, and you will be able to reach this Pure Land. Now, we wish to go to the Pure Land, well, the virtuous teachers have pointed out to me [how to get there]. As for:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 06:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P93 L3]

Then picture before you your teachers. Saying the sūtra's words out loud, concentrate one-pointedly on their meaning. In this same way, substitute these words in the former sūtra [the *Ten Teaching Sūtra*], as well.

These three statements are precisely for their actual practice. Later, when we gradually advance - if proper advancement is available - then each one of us will be able to reach this level. How can it be accomplished? You first have to visualize the virtuous teachers in front of you. Usually, when we visualize our virtuous teacher in this manner – for example, our teacher is the Shakyamuni Bhagavan. Or, if your primary practice is the Dharma paths of Avalokitesvara, then the virtuous teacher is Avalokitesvara - this teacher is the manifestation of Avalokitesvara. Or you can view your teacher as the image you select, perhaps as Amitabha Buddha or Shakyamuni Buddha. Or you may visualize Amitabha Buddha: Well! Amitabha Buddha manifested this way before me. Thus, mindfully envisage the appearance of the virtuous teacher, and then recite mindfully in accordance to the chanting.

[19B, 08:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P93 L12]

If you can properly practice in this manner, it will be very easy and without too much difficulty, you will be able to achieve it. If you pray to Avalokitesvara, you will see Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. If you pray to Amitabha Buddha, Amitabha Buddha will appear. As long as everyone works on it earnestly, the opportunity to see [them] will absolutely be there. There are these types of practitioners at this

present time; don't consider these people to be eminent and unapproachable, not like that! No! On the contrary, they are learners, people who are learning, and they could be about the same age as those of you sitting here, some are in their thirties and some in their forties. This is what I have seen with my own eyes, absolutely not fooling you. You just try to do your best and we will all reach it one day. That is why I often say: "It is not difficult to be reborn in the Pure Land!" You think about it, you chant Amitabha Buddha's name for Amitabha Buddha to appear in front of you, wouldn't it be very easy? It is just like that! It won't be that we chanted for our entire lives, but in our final moments, we become totally confused with chaos and rely on others' assistance for the chanting. In the end, it is still uncertain whether we can be reborn [in Pure Land]. This is our last resort [prior to our ultimate enlightenment]. Now, let us continue:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P83; 19B, 09:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P94 L6]

Furthermore, the *Array of Stalks Sūtra* says:

I, Sudhana, have come here

**Thinking one-pointedly, "These are my teachers,
instructors in the teachings,**

**The ones who totally reveal the good qualities of all
things,**

And then fully teach the bodhisattva way of life."

**"Because of giving birth to these qualities in me, they
are like my mother.**

**Because of giving me the milk of good qualities, they
are like my wet nurses.**

**They thoroughly train me in the branches of
enlightenment.**

These teachers turn away agents of harm;

Like doctors, they free me from old age and death.

Like Indra, the chief of the deities, they let a rain of nectar fall;

Like the full moon, they fill me with the white teachings of virtue;

Showing the way toward peace, they are like the light of the sun;

With regard to friends and enemies, they are like mountains;

They have minds imperturbable as the ocean;

They wholly care for me and are like pilots of a ferry."

Thinking in this way, I have come here.

"These bodhisattvas have caused my mind to develop;

They have produced my enlightenment as a buddha's child;

Therefore these, my teachers, are praised by the buddhas."

With such virtuous thoughts, I have come here.

"As they protect the world, they are like heroes;

They are captains, protectors, and refuge.

They are an eye providing me with happiness."

With such thoughts, I respect and serve my teachers.

In accordance with this statement, you too should remember your teachers' kindness with these verses, using a melody and substituting yourself for Sudhana.

Still, it quotes from the same section from *the Array of Stalks Sutra*; I will go over it briefly instead explain it line by line. It says that the teachers have given us sublime teachings. As for these two words "sublime teachings," now we gradually have an idea of this concept. It is not referring to opening the scriptures and then just reciting the text once or even interpreting the text based on our perceptions, not so! [We have to] truthfully and properly abide by the teachings. After you have attained experiential knowledge

within, then the words spoken [by you] will gradually accord [with the teaching] – becoming closer to perfection. This concept – "the ones who totally reveal the good qualities of all things" – is that, with regard to everything and every aspect of merits, Sudhana will reveal to us and tell us in all aspects.

[19B, 11:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P95 L5]

In our current practice, we think that it is difficult now. If you have acquired the proper recognition, it is not difficult; instead, it will actually be the easiest. This is because everything we engage in, regardless of whether it is tangible or intangible, with eyes open or shut, asleep or awake, the appearing object is called phenomenon. The phenomenon is nothing other than this [reliance]. Before you have this understanding, you are continuously submerged in ignorance, fostering contamination. Upon understanding, you properly abide by it to increase merits. This reliance is all based on the teachings! Because you are able [to practice in this manner], contemplate: "Ah that is right! My virtuous teacher taught me everything...we are now in the midst of afflictions; we can only rely on the virtuous teacher to transform affliction to merits, and to convert flaws into merits. Ah! The beauty is beyond description, this is too wonderful to describe!" Just like this. Therefore, in every aspect, you read it in this manner. Why is it that there are many instances in the sutras they seem to be heavily layered to us? There is a lot of embedded meaning. With each statement, the content gets deeper and wider with each layer. This is one perspective. For the other one, to us ordinary beings, well, you may be consistently chanting, maybe some section accords to you and triggers your realization. Furthermore, isn't it the case that the more and

the longer [the chanting is], your merits and wisdom will further develop? So isn't it the case that the longer and more there is, the better it is? So with every aspect, there is a special meaning; it all has its significant meaning!

[19B, 13:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P96 L2]

Now, we should be like the Youthful Sudhana. Where are all these key points recorded? They are all in *The Chapter on Entering the Dharma-realm*. In this chapter, Youthful Sudhana visited 53 teachers. Hence, with faith, understanding, application, and realization – the reasoning previously revealed to us: you have "faith," you "understood," and you were taught how to "practice," and you actually become "realized" in the end. That is the process! In the beginning, chapter sixty-seven of *the Array of Stalks of Sutra* says: to the east of the city of Dhanyakaranagara (福城), Manjusri Bodhisattva spoke to Youthful Sudhana. Thereafter, [Youthful Sudhana] visited virtuous teachers one after another and advanced continuously. [It describes] how virtuous teachers instructed Youthful Sudhana, what Youthful Sudhana learned, in what manner he experienced realization, and what the mental process was. If we have the opportunity, we should try to study it well. Otherwise, if you can properly understand what this treatise is telling us, and are able to progress profoundly one step at a time, there will be enough to benefit us - the benefit s boundless!

[19B, 15:11; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P96 L10]

So, at the present time, constantly remember this! The primary allocation of time should be applied here. Do not

merely listen and, upon hearing, close the text. This effect will not be great. If, after you listened, wait for a short while, it does not have to be immediate, after ten minutes or half an hour, then read it once again. The impression will be enhanced. If you can be well prepared by reading ahead, even without understanding it, by the time you listen to the teachings, it will make a great difference. If, after listening, you review it again, then the effects will be very great, much greater! By then, you will definitely have very visible progress. Regardless of whether you are chanting Buddha's name, doing Zen meditation, or studying the tenets that you are learning, the effects will be completely different. This is due to your mental condition becoming extremely favorable and sharply available.

[19B, 16:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P97 L2]

For instance, it is the same for us now. If you use gasoline, if it is used in "bumper cars", that is one way to power it, if you put it in motorcycle and that is another way. Put it in regular cars but, because engines vary, the effects will be different. Now, our engine is a very old one, worn to a decrepit condition. So the first thing – the engine represents our mental cognition, our mind stream. You must purify it first, and then apply the teachings. Wow, the effect will be powerful and efficient! In our daily lives now, why do we need to simplify and focus? This is the reason. Let's take a break now.

[19B, 17:00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P97 L8]

The above is about relying on a virtuous teacher, we should have proper recognition in our mind. Abide by it to

cultivate and improve. Then the next step is about the application, how to practice. Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P84; 19B, 17:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P97 L10]

2) How to rely in practice

This is the concept of how to rely on a virtuous teacher, and how to uphold this in application. The author cited the following:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P84; 19B, 17:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P97 L12]

Aśvaghōṣa's *Fifty Verses on the Guru* (Guru-pañcāśikā) says:

Aśvaghōṣa Bodhisattva compiled it with regard to how to rely on virtuous teachers. This is a Mahayana text, [relying on the teacher is] especially emphasized in the Vajrayana teachings. It should be put in this way: the higher you go in terms of practice, the more rigorous the rules, the stricter the precepts are. Let us read:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P84; 19B, 18:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P98 L2]

**What need is there to say much here —
Do whatever pleases your gurus;
Eliminate all that displeases them.
Analyzing this, strive at it.
Once you have understood Vajradhara's statement,
"Attainments follow proper reliance on the master,"
Thoroughly please your gurus**

In all things.

It says, is there any need to say more? Why did he make this comment? Now, since you are Mahayana practitioners or even higher than that, these concepts should be very clear and obvious, there is no need to elaborate. What is needed then? Your effort – this "strive" is not to be taken lightly, you must wholeheartedly devote yourself to "analyzing this, strive at it." With regard to the "this" and "it," one refers to the virtuous teacher and the other refers to the teachings that the virtuous teacher emphasizes. One refers to the virtuous teacher in person. As the aforementioned sections told us, in our reliance on the virtuous teacher, [we should] forsake our preference, and, in every aspect, serve, respect, and make offerings to the virtuous teachers. Thus, the external physical service is one [way to serve the teacher]; the internal aspect is to offer proper practice, which is another aspect. For those of us who sincerely practice Buddha Dharma, this should be analyzed. Upon analyzing, practice accordingly, and do whatever pleases the teachers and "eliminate all" things that displease [them]. Completely do away with it, do not engage in it.

[19B, 19:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P98 L12]

Thus, from the previous sections, we understand what is consequential? The virtuous teacher must be endowed with certain qualifications, and then you can rely on him. And, for those qualified virtuous teachers, when [they] become perfected [they] are Buddha. Of course! Buddha's wish is for you to achieve Buddhahood, so you, of course, will mindfully want to rely on him. Furthermore, Buddha will completely and flawlessly reveal to you how to achieve Buddhahood. Therefore, in this circumstance, as long as you are willing to rely on him, achievement is certain! Especially for us, our

mental momentum is only at the level of an ordinary being, whatever self-centeredness we do for ourselves ends up being harmful. Hence, the only approach is to listen to the personal instructions from virtuous teachers. But if you are careless and not mindful, alas, this "me" will become dominant again. Therefore, if you do not strive diligently, it will never work! This is why the text told us to "strive" at it. In other words, you must work hard at it. This reliance on virtuous teachers is not a matter of ambiguity. It is not like, well, I spare some time to pay the virtuous teacher a visit and serve him a little bit! It is not just like that. In the beginning, yes, we cannot expect to achieve it in one breath. It would be impossible to reach the sky in a single bound. Thus, we progress gradually. By the time we reach the profound stage, one will focus the entire attention on understanding what the requirements of the virtuous teachers are, what their aspirations are, this is how it works. If you abide by it accordingly, ah, then that is correct!

[19B, 21:41; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P99 L9]

Why do we need to do this? Well, below it tells us that "Vajradhara" said so, he is Sambhogakaya Buddha – said by this blissful form Buddha himself. The words of a Nirmanakaya Buddha may not be perfectly complete, may be of provisional meaning, or may be common to all three vehicles. However, the Sambhogakaya Buddha's speech is complete, perfectly thorough. Your attainments are totally dependent on the root guru. With this understanding, for anything, you must "thoroughly please" – without any reservations and no exceptions, with hundred percent sincerity, venerate to offer the virtuous teacher.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P84; 19B, 22:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P99 L14]

In brief, you must strive to achieve what pleases your gurus and eliminate what displeases them.

Precisely this. [You] must strive hard! This will please your teachers. Eliminate what displeases them. What would "please" them?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 19B, 22:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P100 L3]

The three avenues to achieving what pleases your gurus are offering material gifts, respecting and serving with body and speech, and practicing in accordance with their words.

There are three avenues: the first is to offer all "material gifts" to the virtuous teacher; this is the external aspect. For the internal aspect, serve him with "body and speech." Lastly, practice in accordance with their words – these three avenues or stages. The first one, "offering material gifts," is to accumulate personal merits. "Respecting and serving with body and speech," is to quell coarse afflictions. "Practicing in accordance with their words" is to excel on the path. These are the necessary steps. Thus, we must understand, once you recognize this, the deeper you understand it, the more benefit that will arise. Otherwise, why should we, for no apparent reason, forsake our own enjoyment and offer it to you? Of course, you will feel awkward and uncomfortable about it. So, once you have the proper understanding, at that time you will engage with great joy and do a very good job.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 19B, 23:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P100 L10]

This is also stated in Maitreya's *Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras*:

**Rely on the teacher by way of
Respect, material things, service, and practice.**

What did the scriptures tell us about how to rely on a virtuous teacher? This is how: "respect, material things, service." In other words, as mentioned before, offer all of the external material goods and then even serve [the teacher] in person, followed by practicing in accordance with his words.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 19B, 24:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P101 L1]

And also:

**A steadfast person who practices just as taught by
the guru
Pleases that guru properly.**

What are all of your attainments? Practicing according to the guru's words. If this is so, the excellent teacher will be pleased. What pleases a true excellent teacher? When you attain Buddhahood! If you can practice in this way and be "steadfast", of course, the excellent teacher will be pleased. Thus, Buddha may not be pleased with any of your offerings, but if you practice as taught by the guru, he will be most pleased. This is the true greatness of Buddha! In order to liberate us, Buddha manifested as an ordinary being. Of course, this also pleases him. This is what we should truly cultivate (Practicing according to the guru's words).

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 19B, 24:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P101 L7]

1) Offering material gifts.

First is the offering of material gifts.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 19B, 24:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P101 L9]

The Fifty Verses on the Guru:

If you always rely on your pledge master

By giving things not normally given —

Your child, spouse, and your own life —

What need to speak of ephemeral resources?

This word "always," regardless whether it is referring to the body or mind, the remembrances will be continuous and mindful throughout time. Offer what? The things that are the hardest to give away – our external possessions, among these external possessions, even those closest to you like your spouse and children, offer them all. Even for internal possessions, which are from our personal lives, offer yourself to your "pledge master." The pledge master is a Vajrayana teacher. Why does it specifically mention the Vajrayana teacher here? The true Vajrayana teacher is Buddha's manifestation in the form of an ordinary being. Hence, this should be your proper attitude upon encountering such a situation; this is what should be done. Therefore, in the 53 visits of the Youthful Sudhana, all the visits were to this type of virtuous teachers – so it is true that such qualified disciples will have such qualified teachers and such achievements. This is our role model, needless to mention [the offering of] "ephemeral resources" or anything else.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 19B, 26:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P102 L4]

And also:

Offering to your pledge master constitutes

Continuous offering to all the buddhas.

Offering to them is the collection of merit;

From the collections of merit and sublime wisdom comes the supreme attainment.

What does this kind of offering achieve? "Offering to all Buddhas." Well! Now, offering to one Buddha is considered extremely incredible, yet all you need to do is to make offerings to your teacher, and this is equivalent to making offerings to all the Buddhas of the Dharma Realm! So, here, this proves to us that because you have accumulated the merits, your achievement is possible. Now we want to achieve Buddhahood, which requires accomplishing both perfect blissful merits and wisdom merits. If you can make offerings in this way to your guru, these collections will be completed, how fast! Normally, well, who knows how long will it take for us. Now, with a truly qualified teacher, you apply accordingly and such benefit can be achieved.

[19B, 27:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P102 L10]

Here, you may ask: "Ah, that's true, there's no mistake ...". For now, [let's] not talk about not understanding this concept. For those who understand the concept and have faith in it, consider this concept absolute right, then, I believe [they will] want to quickly find such a teacher! Upon having this thought: "However, the teacher who ordained me is not like that. So, I do not want to make offerings to him." This

concept seemingly appears to be correct, but actually, it is completely wrong, totally wrong! Every thing requires proper steps must be with stages. If there is a real Buddha or Bodhisattva in front of you, honestly speaking you may not recognize them. In fact, the reason you have encountered a Buddha or Bodhisattva is due to your karmic deeds. Now, the one who ordained you is the person who first guides you to the entrance [of Buddha Dharma], and you don't even appreciate this kindness. Once you find Buddha, [with this attitude] will you be able to find Buddha?

[19B, 27:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P103 L3]

Thus, it is said earlier that, our greatest worldly benefactors are our parents. I still remember an interesting and meaningful story. It occurred in my hometown and was probably about 70 years ago. Wow! Back then; it was at the end of the Manchurian dynasty and the beginning of the Republic when many went to study abroad. Of course, nowadays, attending a university is common and not a rare phenomenon. But at that time, it is not easy even to attend elementary school. Surprisingly enough, there was this common person who sent one of his children to study abroad for advanced education. [This child attended] the best high school and the best university – Tsinghua University. I believe everyone can understand even now the reputation of this university, along with Beijing University. Both are still very prominent, so he studied abroad. Upon returning, the parents were very pleased, their entire life focused on this son. After he returned, the parents were very happy to see the son come home, and they invited relatives and friends for a meal, but the son disagreed. He thought about his parents – this is not right, that is not right,

lacked knowledge and so forth! You think about it, if you were there, what would you think about this son?

[20A, 00:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P107 L1]

However, he was seeing the facts: he studied abroad and his perspectives were so lofty, [consequently] his parents were like country bumpkins who knew nothing. When they spoke, they were so unsophisticated, well, well, well! Such was their behavior. Now, we can look at this person and make fun of him. In fact, we should look within to reflect upon ourselves. Here, we have gained a lot of knowledge, which is similar [to this person]! Isn't it so? Thus, this is what we truly need to reflect on.

[20A, 00:43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P107 L5]

First, if we think about it, we [monastics] should appreciate the master who ordained us! With this mental attitude, marvelous things will follow! Gradually, gradually everyone becomes your benefactor, even those who stared at you today and scolded you. You will think: "Well! Amitabha Buddha! This person helps train my patience; he is enabling me to attain my Buddhahood!" Isn't it so? Since you want to become a Buddha and are grateful to Buddha, now this person comes along to help you achieve your generosity, patience, and joyous perseverance. How can you not appreciate him? He is helping you to train and enabling you to attain Buddhahood! Once you have this recognition, all problems can be resolved and, at the same time, you will be in concordance with the teachings. Upon this understanding, things become even better - that will be the time when you will notice that your afflictions are gone.

Wow, by nature, your arrogance is huge and, through engaging in contention with others day and night, [your mind] is filled with afflictions. But by then, all of your afflictions will be gone. What will remain is your gratitude and the fulfillment of your mental accordance with the teaching. Your merits and wisdom will multiply and, wherever you go, people will welcome you. Thus, in any situation, anybody would be delighted to see the Buddha. Why? That was due to his stepwise accumulation of merits. Now, with our petty study of the teaching, we despise this and that. Thus, wherever we go, people would be scared of us. Alas, the more we learn, the more people would become afraid of us. How can we become Buddha? Isn't this reason very clear!

[20A, 02:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P108 L8]

So, here we say, ah, this is how it works! Yes, even though he is the virtuous teacher, hence, I need to respect him. The reverence begins from here. Furthermore, our teacher now appears as an ordinary being filled with flaws. If you can appreciate him, then by the time there is a virtuous teacher with minor faults, you will not pick on him, right? Is this clear? Realize that the reason the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are not here is not because of their lack of compassion, it is just because they are compassionate that they are not here. Presently, we are full of illnesses. We see this as not right, that as not right, so when Buddha and Bodhisattvas appear right in front of you, you look at them disagreeably. When you glare at him, you will be sent to the hell realms, and it will be for a long time. How can he bear it! He is here to save you. But as a result, not only would he not save you, but rather deliver you to the hell realm immediately. It should not be this way! Thus, he has no choice but not to come. Therefore, at this time, if you rely on

an ordinary being and you are able to respect him in this manner, then your mind is supple. Well, when Buddha and Bodhisattvas appear right in front you, you will not commit those mistakes, and that is the time when the great beings will come! Isn't this very clear?

[20A, 03:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P109 L2]

So when children begin to play with a toy car, they roll it around on the ground. If you, the child, were to get into a real car, needless to say, you can't drive. If something happens, you might die in a car accident. But, as you gradually grow up, well, when you see a car and sit in it, once you have the ability to drive, then it will work. Now, you don't have the ability yet and, when facing such a situation, problems will arise immediately. Let's not talk about cars; it is the same with a knife. When children play with knives or wooden swords, trouble may arise. But at the most, the spot where you get hit might hurt for a while. If you play with a real knife or gun, whoever gets struck will be wounded and there will be problems. Isn't this very clear, very obvious? Thus, our present perceptions are erroneous and absurd. This is why, when studying and applying Buddha Dharma, never claim that you understood it, got it. Actually, for now, we are totally out of it, yet thinking that self-attainment is there. What a big mistake!

[20A, 04:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P109 L10]

What I just said is for your own review during the evening session. I genuinely hope that, if you do not understand after hearing, you ask questions. Once those questions are resolved, then we can advance gradually. Now, let's

continue. Because of your accumulation of merits, well, once merits are collected, you will have accomplishments, just like that. At the present stage, our practice is indeed short of merits, alas! Obstacles are everywhere. Once you have built up your collection of merit, you will get everything else. That is when things will work your way. Thus, that is why the blissful merits must be accumulated first. This may not apply to Hinayana practitioners. But for Mahayana practitioners, this is very important, too important! So, we will not discuss it for now. Let's continue:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 04:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P109 L10]

Furthermore, Lak-so-wa (Lag-sor-ba) said:

This virtuous teacher is telling us:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 05:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P110 L3]

If you offer what is bad while possessing what is good, you ruin your pledge.

These Tantric precepts are very serious! You need to offer to the guru, as well as give the best to him. If you keep the best stuff for yourself and offer inferior things, this is wrong, a transgression! Offer him the best, and if he does not want it or if he delights in something else, then there is no transgression.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 05:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P110 L7]

If the guru is pleased with this or you have nothing other than what is bad, then there is no fault.

However, if the guru is pleased with the inferior things, then you should abide by his will. Or, you don't have any good things, only the inferior things, and then there is no fault.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 05:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P110 L10]

This is similar to *the Fifty Verses on the Guru*,

What guru Lak-so-wa said was similar to *the Fifty Verses on the Guru*.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 05:42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P110 L12]

which says:

**One who wishes for the inexhaustible
Offer to the guru
Whatever is slightly appealing, and
Whatever is very special.**

If you are inspired to become a Buddha, “who wishes for the inexhaustible” means Buddha, which is truly inexhaustible and perfect. Thus, in this case, “whatever” refers to anything that is slightly appealing, well! If the teacher delights in it, then you should take it and offer it to

him. Do so in the best and most auspicious manner. This “whatever” mainly refers to external resources. Although these things are external resources, yet your mental process is your internal resource! You have to comply with it mindfully, and then that will be the best offering.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 06:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P111 L6]

Furthermore, the students’ perspective differs from the gurus’ perspective. The students must do this offering, because the gurus are the supreme field through which the students accumulate the collections of merit and sublime wisdom.

The author tells us: “By so doing, well, this is the best and most special collection of merits for Buddha Dharma practitioners. So this is the proper way, and it is what we should do!” As in the earlier story of the novice monk: one novice monk followed his elderly master in the monastery, the young novice earnestly served and made offerings to this teacher. The master, at times, spoke casually to him: “This is for your own good.” The teacher always said this: no matter how you serve him, he always thought it was for your own good. Upon hearing this, the novice thought: “Master, I have done my utmost to serve you. You always think that it is for my own good, then I shouldn’t be bothered anymore!” As a result, the novice treated his master carelessly and cared only about himself. Alas! The elderly monk said: “This time around it is for my own good!” You all should think about this. Why? Next:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 07:25; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P111 L14]

However, the gurus must not take the gifts into consideration.

That was the student's perspective. Conversely, what about that of the guru? You do your best to offer your guru, but the guru is not attached to your gifts. The gurus must "not take the gifts into consideration." Below, a guru tells us:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P85; 20A, 07:42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P112 L3]

Sha-ra-wa (Sha-ra-ba) said:

We use the word "guru" for whomever is pleased by practice and does not give even the slightest consideration to material gifts.

One who does the opposite is not suitable to be a guru for those wishing to achieve liberation.

Those who are truly qualified to be our virtuous teachers, what will they focus on? Applying the teachings! For your material gifts or physical and verbal reverence, he "does not give even the slightest consideration," he doesn't even look at it. This is a real [qualified virtuous teacher]. That is his mental attitude. The reason he accepts you is to support your achievement. Therefore, you all should thoroughly read *The Biography of Venerable Atisha*. It is very clear, very explicit, extremely clear, and extremely explicit! All great practitioners are like that – their disciples offer everything, well, and as a result, the guru was indifferent. There are times if you don't offer it is not acceptable! In the *Biography of Milarepa*, there is a story – do you all remember? Well, Venerable Milarepa's teacher was Venerable Marpa, who had several important disciples. One of them went to request Dharma [from Marpa], and he brought everything from his home as an offering. Wow, that was unbelievable!

All valuable items were traded in for gold, silk, and cloth whatever was readily usable and could be easily transported. Lastly, Tibetans are nomads – all horses, yaks, and goats were offered. But there was this old mountain goat, a recalcitrant old mountain goat. Whichever herd it was put into, the herd of goats would fight. So this disciple thought, since the old goat had a bad leg and a bad temper, he left it out of the offering. Everything else was brought and offered to his teacher [Marpa] and, as a result, his teacher asked him: “With these offerings, do you still have any more things left at home?” The disciple said: “Yes, there is one old mountain goat, such an old mountain goat.” “No, No! You are still holding something back from the offering, this Dharma cannot be transmitted to you.” Notice that if it were us, this action, wouldn’t this seem ludicrous? Eventually, the old mountain goat was brought and offered to his teacher. “Actually, what do I need it for? This is for the dependent arising of the teaching!” “Oh! Well, well!” It was like this.

[20A, 09:37; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P113 L6]

That disciple of [Marpa] was very interesting. If it were us, we would grumble, how can the teacher be this way! That disciple said: “Then I will go and fetch [the goat] immediately. If I bring it, will you transmit the teachings to me?” “That will do!” The disciple couldn’t wait any longer, and set off immediately. The road conditions in Tibet were not easy to walk on. Normally, it would take a few months but, because of his attainment, he ran even faster than a car. The distance that would normally take a few months of walking took him half a day to return – relying on qigong. He carried the goat on his back and offered it to his teacher around noon. The teacher said: “This disciple, a true Tantric disciple

should be like so.” Thus, from our perspective, how [Milarepa] could achieve in one lifetime, there are reasons. There is no need for us to emphasize that for now, here it specifically clarifies the so-called accumulating merits; their teacher-disciple relationship was like this!

[20A, 10:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P113 L14]

It was the same with his teacher – the teacher was very interesting, too. Venerable Marpa also sold all his belongings, traded them for gold, and went to search for his teacher. That teacher was Venerable Naropa, who was a contemporary of Venerable Atisha, and was one of Venerable Atisha’s gurus. That was when Venerable Naropa had already been dead for many years, but Marpa didn’t care, he just wanted to find his teacher. Ah! Such a person with this respectful attitude! Wherever he went, he asked: “Well, have you seen my teacher? Have you seen my teacher?” As though he was out of his mind. He was so absorbed that he forgot to sleep and eat. After many years of searching, he finally found [teacher Naropa]. Actually, a high achiever will never die. This is due to their accomplished causes and conditions! Now we [should know] that there are many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that are like this. And then, finally, [Naropa] transmitted a set of the great teachings to Marpa.

[20A, 11:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P114 L6]

Therefore, if we are serious about studying Buddha Dharma, [we] ought to be mindful of these biographies and make them our role models. That is when your eyes should turn upward, which is the right thing to do. I should always

look up to and learn from Buddha and Bodhisattva, to pattern after them. That is the right attitude! So, here we must understand the [proper] relationship between a teacher and disciple. What about the second avenue? What is it? It is serving respectfully physically and verbally – how to serve him.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 11:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P114 L10]

2) *Respecting and serving with body and speech.* This means such physical actions as bathing, massaging, cleaning dirt from the body, and nursing, as well as such vocal actions as pointing out the guru's good qualities.

The former is “physically” supporting him with everything, such as bathing and, even when he is not feeling well, serving him accordingly. What about “speech”? “Praising the guru's good qualities,” this praise should not be superficial praise. Wow, by saying: “my teacher is Buddha,” this is not necessary, or “Ah! My teacher's good qualities are incredible,” like this. However, in order for you to praise teacher, you have to understand that, without wisdom, you will not be able to identify your teacher's merits, and you are not able to properly perceive the teacher's faults either. This we should know. Thus, first possess the defining characteristics of a proper disciple of Buddha Dharma. Next is the third avenue.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 12.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P115 L2]

3) *Practicing according to the guru's words.* This means to practice without contradicting what the guru instructs you to do. This is most important.

This is the most important. The former one is accumulating merits, to tame us physically and mentally. After that, apply the teachings accordingly and then perfect enlightenment can be attained.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 12:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P115 L5]

For, as the *Garland of Birth Stories* says:

**The worship that you should do in return for my help
Is to practice in accordance with my instructions.**

This is also our ultimate goal. This is how to truly repay his kindness, “to practice in accordance with my instructions.”

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 13:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P115 L7]

***Question:* We must practice in accordance with the gurus' words. Then what if we rely on the gurus and they lead us to an incorrect path or employ us in activities that are contrary to the three vows? Should we do what they say?**

The next statement is very important to us right now! But this was specifically in Tibet. Here, we should recognize that during Buddha's time, those virtuous teachers were admittedly Buddhas, and their disciples all had great virtuous roots. Thus, this situation [where there was a lack of respect] was unlikely to happen. During a degenerate

time, not only are disciples poorly qualified, perfectly qualified teachers are also hard to find. I specifically referred to “appearance”, why? There are still teachers who are the manifestation of Buddha or Bodhisattvas, and the reason they are here has to do with concordant conditions. Usually, in our imaginations, ah! Buddhas and Bodhisattvas manifest with a certain appearance, wrong! For a Buddha or Bodhisattva to manifest, they must accord with the arising condition, this we must understand. Yes, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will manifest. But, after all, you are an ordinary being, and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will manifest to you as ordinary beings that are slightly better than you, this we have to know. Therefore, in this case, when Buddhas and Bodhisattvas speak, they will say wrong things and make mistakes in handling things, too. Indeed – the true cause is according to our contaminated karma, this we should recognize. This is a very important concept!

[20A, 14:24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P116 L5]

Well, under this circumstance, yes, other than the manifestation of Buddha and Bodhisattvas, what else is there? Actually, there are teachers who are definitely better than us. There are other people who are like that, too. As for these people, they indeed may have many flaws. Then what should you do? We must discern with wisdom; the author will explain it next. If this teacher requires abiding by him on everything, and if he told us something unreasonable, or even told us something contrary to ethical discipline, then what would you do? In Tantra practice from India to Tibet, the teacher is Buddha, and whatever he said you have to

listen to him. In the past, it was like this, but this may not work in the times that follow.

[20A, 15:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P116 L10]

Recently, in *Buddhism Treasure Collection**, there is a very good article on this topic: in the case where applying [reliance on a teacher] is done without skill, it can be harmful, detrimental! Thus, not only does it have to be “logical,” it also needs to be “agreeable with the disposition of the recipient.” Under such circumstances, the approach that agrees with one person may not work for another. The way Venerable Milarepa was treated during his time, that treatment may not be applicable in our present time. Likewise, in China, during the time of the flourishing Tang dynasty, the attitudes of great teachers may not be applicable to us now, this we should understand. Therefore, at this juncture, when encountering these situations, next the text tells us:

[Translator’s Note: *Buddhism Treasure Collection** refers to 佛教宝藏. The English name of this book has yet to be verified.]

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 15:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P117 L1]

Reply: With respect to this, Gunaprabha’s Sutra on the Discipline states, “If the abbot instructs you to do what is not in accord with the teachings, refuse.”

If the abbot instructed you to do what is not in accord with the teachings, you should refrain from doing it. This is stated in the teaching of ethical discipline as well as in the *Sutra*.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 16:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P117 L4]

Also, the *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* says,

The *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* also states:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 16:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P117 L6]

“With respect to virtue act in accord with the gurus’ words, but do not act in accord with the gurus’ words with respect to nonvirtue.”

Therefore, with respect to that which does not accord with the teachings, do not abide by it. This is very crucial – you have to properly distinguish between virtue and nonvirtue. Fortunately, the stages are clearly identified here. We have already followed the stages, and should know the required “qualifications” which include the quality of “wisdom,” so you are able to tell the difference. Otherwise, you would be muddle-headed and just act in accord with the teacher’s words, by listening and carrying it out. That would be disastrous! During Buddha’s time, there was a case about Angulimala. He relied on a teacher. When the teacher told him what to do, he followed, and killed many people. Luckily, he possessed great virtuous roots! So we have to understand that this condition not only happened later in the Tantra practice, but it also happened during Buddha’s time the Hinayana practice was the same. This is very clear, very explicit.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 16:56; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P117 L13]

Therefore, you must not listen to nonvirtuous instructions. The twelfth birth story clearly gives the meaning of not engaging in what is improper.

If the teacher told us something unreasonable, we should not engage in it. This is not only stated in the above sutras, commentaries also tell us clearly not to engage in improper instruction given by the teacher. However, the statement below is very important!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 17:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P118 L3]

However, it is improper to take the gurus' wrong actions as a reason for subsequent misbehavior such as disrespecting, reproaching, or despising the gurus. Rather, excuse yourself politely, and do not engage in what you were instructed to do. The *Fifty Verses on the Guru*:

Nevertheless, never ever use this to criticize a teacher and then become disrespectful! Disrespect is not allowed, not to mention disparaging or criticizing him, these are absolutely not allowed! For you, as was previously mentioned, as long as he gave you a verse of four statements, you have to earnestly strive to offer to him for the same number of eons. You still wouldn't be able to repay his kindness. And now you are trying to disparage him, how dreadful! So, below are quotes from the *Fifty Verses on the Guru* again:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 17:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P118 L9]

If you cannot reasonably do as the guru has instructed,

If, for some reason, you are not able to do it, you need to say: “No, I cannot.”

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 18:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P118 L11]

Excuse yourself with soothing words.

This must be very skillful and tactful, very tactfully say: “O Master! I am really not able! I beg your pardon, I cannot do that!” He may berate you, and just let him. Actually, if you can bear his berating joyfully, it helps to clear your obscurations and increases your blissful and wisdom merits, this we have to understand. You will then become very delighted. It is just like what was mentioned earlier about the interaction of Geshe Lha-so and his master. Well, [Geshe Lha-so] went to his great master who berated him, and then his disciple wondered why the great master kept on berating [Geshe Lha-so]. Geshe Lha-so said: “You still think that he is berating you! To me, it is like a personal blessing from my chosen deity.” Well, just like that!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 18:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P119 L5]

Furthermore, when you rely on your gurus in this way, acquire a portion of their teachings. As Maitreya’s *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* states:

By gaining a share of your gurus’ teachings,

You rely on the teachers in order to possess good qualities, not for material things.

Why should I engage in this way? To gain a portion of the teachings – Buddha Dharma develops our good qualities. We rely on the virtuous teachers but not for material gain, this material refers to the worldly things, refers to the mundane world.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 19:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P119 L8]

***acquire a portion of their teachings.**

Why do we rely on him? To enhance our Dharma-form-and-wisdom-life, and it all starts from here.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P86; 20A, 19:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P119 L10]

Bo-do-wa said:

Below is a case cited by this master of the lineage - Bo-do-wa said:

When Ananda was appointed as the Teacher's attendant, he thought of future followers of the teaching and then made the following vow, "I will serve and respect the Teacher under the conditions that I am not allowed to keep his unused robes or eat his leftover food, and that I am free to be with him at any time."

When Buddha selected his attendant, many followers wanted to become Buddha's attendant. Beginning with Aruojiao Ajanta-Kaundinya, one by one they all wished to

serve Buddha because of their appreciation! Buddha told Aruojiao: “Please don’t! You are getting older, you can’t!” In fact, all of them had attained arhatship and, in their minds, they all wished that Ananda could come forward to serve. Ananda had newly attained the stream-enterer level of sage, but he remained silent. Later, everyone said: “Ananda! Buddha prefers you!” “I would like to serve but I have some conditions.” The others thought: everyone could hardly wait for this opportunity, yet Ananda had conditions, isn’t this improper? However, if you look at his conditions, once understood them, you will definitely respect Ananda with the utmost admiration! This is why a virtuous teacher is considered as such. Ananda said: “I would like to serve Buddha, but to do so, there are some conditions.” What conditions? “I will not wear robes that Buddha did not want, will not eat leftover food from Buddha, and I will be permitted to meet with him at any time.”

[20A, 20:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P120 L11]

If we were asked to serve this virtuous teacher – of course the attendant wears the teacher’s unused robes! Teacher’s leftover food, of course I will eat it! Well, I indulge in enjoyment all day long! Usually, being among others is miserable, and when people offer Buddha the very best, I would help myself to [the offering]. Alas! Ananda didn’t want any of these good things and, thus, he is our role model! Upon contemplating this, we should feel deeply embarrassed. I am truly abashed, for I cannot achieve it. However, don’t worry, now I understand this. Once this feeling is developed, then this is the right time for us to strive toward being like this role model. Then, why did he want to be allowed to meet with Buddha at any time? For the sake of the teachings! The reason Ananda did this

[attendant position] was for the sake of the teachings. When in doubt, or in whatever circumstances, he needed to go to [Buddha]! [Ananda] definitely refused good things, or the worldly material gain. But if it was Buddha Dharma, he definitely had to have it! Buddha said: “Well, well, well! This is correct!” So,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20A, 21:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P121 L4]

***then made the following vow,
Look at the text:**

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20A, 21:35; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P121 L6]

***he thought of future followers of the teaching**

Why did he take such a cautious approach? To teach and transform us, and our learning begins here. So, what is our condition? See below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20A, 21:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P121 L9]

We present-day followers do not value the teachings at all, but only value the guru’s assigning status to us as demonstrated by each cup of tea that the guru gives to us. This is a sign of our deep corruption.

As of now, we do not care for the teachings. What do we care about? What do we value? Alas, it is so pitiful! Fussing over a little cup of tea, even to fuss over a sip of tea. “He has it and I don’t! Teacher likes him and mistreats me; he gets to eat and I don’t!” What is this? This is a “sign of our

deep corruption.” However, from this moment, we have to understand that we were in the state of ignorance from beginningless time. We are very fortunate now due to our efforts from the past lives, and we have come to understand that this is the root cause of all of our illness. Therefore, from now on we strive to advance.

[20A, 22:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P122 L3]

Thus, the Buddha and Bodhisattvas are truly remarkable. They comfort us: if you cannot do it then it does not mean you have transgressed your vows. However, if you are unwilling to do it, don't understand it, are being lazy, are being sloppy, or aren't doing it properly, then these are considered as transgressions. In the *Level of Yogic Deeds* it states clearly that we are constantly violating precepts. We should follow these by confessing and working hard to advance. As long as you are making progress and gradually improving, then this is the right track! You should never think that, since I can repent anyway then, after repenting, continue with your original propensity. Then this is totally defeating the purpose! This concept itself is completely wrong, definitely will lead to hell! This concept has to be acutely precise; we have to be very clear! Do not say that just because it says in the *Level of Yogic Deeds* that a transgression does not count, and then we might as well commit violations, as long as I follow it by confession. In that case, your downfall to hell is inevitable and who knows when you will be free from it. What is the correct view? It means accurately seeing the signs of our afflictions, and then [we] strive to improve, striving very hard at it! Of course when you are advancing, then it is right! Thus, this is where we need to truly learn. So the above teaches us how to rely. Next, it says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20A, 23:53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P122 L13]

As for how long you should rely on a guru, Bo-do-wa said:

As for the duration of reliance, the text continues by quoting from Bo-do-wa:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20A, 23:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P122 L14]

With each student who comes to me, my burden increases. With each who leaves, it decreases. If you stay apart from the guru, it is not beneficial. Therefore, practice for a long time at a moderate distance.

The words here may not be too clear, let me briefly explain them. Actually, between teacher and disciples, it does not say to have many disciples like what we have here now. It would not work too well. For a true teacher and disciple relationship, have a few of them, only a few disciples. They should wholeheartedly follow the teacher, in this way! It has to be the true primary intent of the teacher, which is nothing other than focusing on his own disciples. Likewise, the disciples should mindfully rely on nothing but the teacher. As far as time is concerned, it must be for a long time. It cannot be a short period, not like that. It is not like us now, coming and saying, well, I listened for a few sessions and that is it. Or studying for three years – this is

not sufficient, not enough. If this is the current intent, then it is sufficient to just plant some virtuous roots!

[20A, 24:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P123 L9]

Actually, we don't need to talk about Buddha Dharma alone; it is the same with worldly matters. In this world, when we want to study for any graduate degree, how many years would that take? Let's calculate, not counting kindergarten, six years for elementary school, six years for high school, and then four years in college. Upon graduation, graduate school follows for at least two years or at most four years, sometimes even six years. How many years is this in total? Well! More than 20 years. Obtaining this worldly knowledge takes more than 20 years. Now, with the study of Buddha Dharma, after listening to one session, well! And after listening to the recording, you claim, "I understood it!" Then you close the door and begin to meditate, you will certainly be unable to have achievement. Or you may say: "Alas, I have already studied for three years in this Buddhist institute!" At that time, minor achievements may be there but, for accomplishment in this lifetime, it definitely requires relying [on teachers] for a longer period of time. So, take heed! The typical stories of the ancient teachers, prior to their actual enlightenment, they followed teachers and endured scolding, suffering, and beating! What kind of treatment was that! Alas, day in and day out, the teachers kept them busy. What were they busy with? When waking up in the morning, starting with preparing water [for the teacher] to wash his face. It is better now with the sanitation facilities, back then this had to be taken care of. What had to be taken care of? Human waste. You were supposed to take care of every detail from the mouth to the bottom, and

they would do this for years. In their minds, they mindfully and faithfully committed to serve the teacher.

[20A, 26:25; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P124 L7]

So the ancient achievers were like this. And then? Well! When the time came and the teacher thought that the time was right for your practice to mature, all of a sudden – breakthrough took place! Once one has made this leap, it does not mean, well, now I am totally enlightened. After that, one would keep his identity hidden and continue with monastic practice for a few more years. Then a great virtuous teacher of the generation would emerge. There are such typical examples - classic role models. So all types are revealed here, enough for each of you to make your own choice. However, it does not mean we have to do exactly the same! Different approaches have different merit. So today you understand this, and are able to propagate this sublime teaching, which is an extraordinary task. This is due to different individuals being endowed with different root attributes. However, we have to truly recognize what is the true content – this is of primary importance. So I will go over the story here.

[20A, 27:24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P124 L15]

Because this complete teaching was passed down from Venerable Atisha, in *The Biography of Venerable Atisha*, there was this story. There were many followers who relied on Venerable Atisha from India to Tibet. There were especially many in India. Later, there were a few major ones in Tibet. The three main ones from Tibet were Drom-don-ba, Nal-jor-ba-chen-bo and Gon-ba-wa. The first two were

laypeople, they were lay practitioners who devoted their entire lives to serve the teacher. Gon-ba-wa was a monastic. In the beginning, he wholeheartedly sought his teacher and, upon receiving the teachings, he practiced constantly. So he was known as Gon-ba-wa (which means quiet place), [he] never stopped practicing. In the end, after his teacher passed away, he lamented: “Alas! Among us fellow brothers, both of them were always by the teacher’s side day and night, served him from his head to his toes. Alas, it seemed like there was no time for them to practice. Whereas for me, I went to listen to our guru’s teachings and, after hearing them, went back and practiced. As a result, my achievements ah, are inferior and cannot be compared to the two of them!”

[20B, 00:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P127 L1]

For this story, read it thoroughly. Presently, many of us think that we have some understanding and then enter a retreat to practice by ourselves. Needless to say, you may not have heard it correctly and, even if you had heard it right, practicing in this manner may not lead to great achievement. The more advanced you become, the more likely this is to happen. Youthful Sudhana was a typical example; he didn’t go to listen to a virtuous teacher and then lock himself up in a retreat. Not like that. After learning from the first teacher, he moved on to the second teacher. And after the second, [he] moved on to the third, and so on up to the last one. Finally, he then went to Samantabhadra Bodhisattva and studied the *Ten Great Vows [Seven Branches of Worship]* to be guided to Pure Land. He did not stop there – an excellent example! So, for this, we should recognize within. There are more examples later, why did he do so? For now, we don’t understand the exact intention, but at least keep this

concept in mind – why did Youthful Sudhana do that? What am I supposed to do? Therefore, our understanding of the essence of Buddha Dharma has a great gap.

[20B, 01:21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P128 L1]

I still remember one of my personal experiences; it was more than 20 years ago. At that time, I was newly ordained and, due to the influence at that time, I felt that environment was not very good. I thought that a true practitioner should go into retreat immediately after ordination and stay in a hut. I was also like that: had my mind set on this – after having my head shaved by the Master, I would go and stay in the hut. That was at Lionhead Mountain, and I was in the Yuan-guang Monastery there. My teacher was Venerable Ben-ming, and he passed away many years ago. There, everything was readily available; I must say that my Master treated me with extreme benevolence. At that time, I did not know much and I actually requested to live in a hut, I even fought to stay in one. Back then, their noon meal was served at 12 p.m. Because I wanted to observe my noon precept, I insisted on eating at 11:30 a.m., and my Master had someone specifically deliver my meal at 11:30 a.m. Surprisingly enough back then, I actually thought I was being conscientious about this and said: “Oh! To make them deliver it is not good, I will go and pick it up.” Now the more I recollect this, the more I feel that it was so ridiculous, so very absurd, and so regretful! Thus, I was eating alone ahead of time, and they had to specifically prepare my meal, just like that. Yet I was still not pleased, always thinking that they were not in concordance with the Dharma, and not applying accordingly! Just like that, so I still wanted to stay in the hut!

[20B, 02:37; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P128 L11]

Eventually, my Master probably couldn't take it anymore. He was so nice! Later, he said: "If you want to stay in the hut, then you just go ahead!" Well, that day I sensed from his tone of voice, which wasn't like my terrible attitude. He was still very tactful to show his intent! Later I thought about it: "Well it is right! If I really went to the hut, everything is readily available now. Even if I went down to pick up [my food], he would have everything prepared. If I stayed in the hut, where would the food come from? What about the source of other necessities?" After pondering this for a long time, I decided not to go. I also did not request to leave. My Master observed me for a few days, and did not say anything, just smiled. Those around me said: "So and so, now you are not going to stay in the hut!" I thought: "Well, no, can't do that!" Alas, at that time there was another person who wanted to stay in the hut. My mind swayed again. Later, I thought about: "Let him go first, if that works I will follow suit." Luckily, I did not go. After a decade or two later – of course in these years between we did have the opportunity to meet each other – after we met, he was remorseful: "Alas! So and so, as a result, I remained in that same state. Initially, the commitment was to study hard and strive earnestly! At first, there seemed to be some signs of achievement, yet later it turned out to be like this, that is all." Only after I introduced him to the "Lamrim," upon hearing it, wow! He used to be more senior than me. When I first started, he provided much guidance to me, and I listened and wholeheartedly took his advice to heart. After hearing [Lamrim], he felt that he had never heard of it before! He came daily to listen with great reverence, and I really felt quite apologetic. I said: "The teachings are not mine, it is Lama Tsong-kha-pa and Buddha's perfect Dharma."

[20B, 04:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P129 L10]

I just by chance thought of this story and mentioned it to you. I sincerely hope that all of you here will not make the same mistake as I did [to retreat in a hut before proper preparation]. As for the aforementioned spending a great effort without much result, everyone is still doing this. I believe for this point, some fellow practitioners here may have this kind of experience. [This mistaken perception] may last one to two years at the least or even three to four years at most – it seems like [your practice] remains in this state. But once you truly rely on virtuous teachers, it will not be the same. Your feelings will be different day to day. I have already explained this to you. If there is an opportunity in the future, I will give you more examples and you all will be able to see it. As for this opportunity, it depends on how hard you strive! Without any effort, you will not be able to see it, not at all. Only with earnest effort and becoming concordant to it will you then be able to see. So far, what I have noticed that the practitioners who are just like this always stay by their teacher's side. Well, no matter how the teacher berates him, he will not leave and, even if he is beaten, he will not leave, just with this attitude. Well! As a result, the disciple achieves attainments. Even with these achievements, they will not reveal it. These practitioners may remain hidden. If they reveal themselves, they could all be great Dharma Gurus and immediately benefit Buddha Dharma with great contribution.

[20B, 05:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P130 L4]

This is with regard to the virtuous teacher and what the proper recognition for their mental, physical, and verbal practice should be. Next, with this conceptual understanding, it further tells us the benefits of relying on virtuous teacher, as well as the faults of not relying. Let's look at the text:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20B, 05:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P130 L7]

d. The benefits of relying on the teacher

This refers to the laudable benefits of relying on a virtuous teacher.

By relying on the teacher, you will come closer to buddhahood; you will please the conquerors, you will not be bereft of future teachers; you will not fall into miserable realms; neither bad karma nor afflictions will overpower you; through mindfulness of the bodhisattva deeds and by not contradicting them your collection of good qualities will continue to increase, and you will reach all of your provisional and final goals;

The first one is “you will come closer to Buddhahood.” What are we here for? To learn to become a Buddha! Although our present purpose is to learn to become Buddha – yes! The purpose is right and the recognition seems to be right, too. But after trying for quite a while, what were contemplated remains only as thoughts. Whereas in actual practice, there is the feeling of: I am just an ordinary being and unable to move forward! Those who are slightly better are remaining in status quo for a long time. Or they are just simply sitting there, just like that. No, not so! This practitioner advances step-by-step, progressing toward what? Nearing Buddhahood. It is this simple, just like that!

Moreover, this is taking a direct route. For one who applies accordingly, that person will “please the conquerors.” Ah, this is the proper and correct way! You are doing it right!

[20B, 07:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P131 L5]

What else? “You will not be bereft of future teachers” because you created the condition in this way! Always be near the virtuous teacher, this is how the karmic effect of dependent-arising works. You will not be apart from the virtuous teacher, will not leave his side, regardless of fruitional or concordant effects. As long as you get to be close to a virtuous teacher, of course you will not fall to the miserable realms! Negative karmic obstacles will gradually be eliminated, “neither bad karma nor afflictions will overpower you,” afflictions will not affect you, and of course negative karma will not affect you either. For us now, we are constantly revolving among negative karma and afflictions. Once you have a virtuous teacher, these will be blocked. What about your conduct? You will not contradict the Bodhisattva deeds. For lay practitioners, observe the lay Bodhisattva vows. For renunciates, observe the monastic Bodhisattva vows. Correctly abide by these.

[20B, 07:51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P131 L11]

“Through mindfulness of the Bodhisattva deeds, your collection of good qualities will continue to increase” because you are able to rely on a virtuous teacher and have received the teacher’s guidance. So if you can recognize it, that is also good, and if your mental activity conforms to what is proper, this is “mindfulness.” This concept is very important. Thus, due to your mindfulness, your action will

naturally be purifying affliction and accumulating merits. Thus, this is about “increase.” Because you cleared away afflictions and accumulated merits, the effects you will reap – both provisional and final – are constantly increasing. Achieving them one by one, “you will reach all of your provisional and final goals.” Such abundant benefits, many advantages! It does not necessarily mean that you must wait until ultimate achievement, the provisional benefit is immediate – the benefit starts now.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20B, 08:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P132 L2]

after obtaining virtue through serving and respecting the teacher with thought and practice, you will accomplish others’ welfare, as well as your own, and complete the collections of merit and sublime wisdom.

Ah! By doing this, both your thoughts and actions will be benefited and they are all virtuous. Thus, under these conditions, your aspiration is to benefit the self and others. To do so, we are engaging in accumulating the provisional merits now. Once the favorable conditions are fulfilled, the future effects will naturally be favorable and can be perfected, such great advantage! As for the benefits, one needs to contemplate profoundly. The more you reflect on it, you will be more joyful, ah! The effect will be greater. By then, your reliance will not be a burden – rather, you will see it as a privilege. Then, the more you engage, the more enthusiastic you will be. That will be the time you have the same sense of our common example of doing business, well! Your feeling will be like making a profit. Although you are

busy with it for quite a while, the profits keep rolling in, and the more enthusiastic [you] become! This is how it works. Next, let's continue:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20B, 09:49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P132 L10]

In that vein the *Array of Stalks Sutra* says:

Child of good lineage, bodhisattvas whom teachers properly support do not fall into miserable realms. Bodhisattvas whom teachers take into consideration do not contradict the bodhisattva training. Bodhisattvas for whom teachers care are elevated above the world. Bodhisattvas who have served and respected their teachers act without forgetting any of the bodhisattva deeds. Bodhisattvas whom teachers fully look after are not overcome by bad karma or afflictions.

Let's clarify this section. "Bodhisattvas" are practitioners cultivating the Bodhisattva deeds, those training to become Bodhisattvas. All of us here now are preparing to take this path at the causal stage. If virtuous teachers properly imbue you, then the downfall to miserable realms will not take place, you will never fall to the lower realms! However, here [we] need to be aware that it is not dependent on the teacher's good qualities. Rather, you should be able to accept the teachers' guidance. The condition to properly uphold the virtuous teachers' guidance is very important. Although the teacher may guide you, telling you: "So and so, you have to do it this way instead of that way!" You stare at him and grumble within for some time, this attitude is of not much help. The next time, he will not give you advice even if you bow to him. It is not that he does not want to guide you,

but that you have rejected it. The help is not there; your rejection is not helpful. We have to understand this.

[20B, 11:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P133 L8]

If you can be imbued by virtuous teachers, as well as “Bodhisattvas whom teachers take into consideration do not contradict the bodhisattva training.” If your teacher keeps you in mind, you will not contradict him. Actually, to say that teacher keeps you in mind means that he considers that you can be taught, and he will be mindful of you in all aspects. In every aspect he sees, he will let you know. If he tells you yet you are defiant in your mind and grumble, can he continue give you advice? Hence, we must know in all cases that it is not that others don’t want to guide you!

[20B, 11:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P133 L13]

This is much like some of our experiences. People often say: “Well! Please tell me if I have done something wrong.” Indeed, there are many with such good intention, and I was one of them back then. I always asked, “Alas, Teacher or certain venerable, please tell me.” But they just wouldn’t tell me. Later, incidentally I realized that it is not that they wouldn’t tell me, but most of the time he would absolutely not say: “Well, so and so! Didn’t you ask me to point out your mistakes? Let me tell you, you sit down and hear me out.” It does not happen like that. When you really make a mistake, he comes to tell you, and then you get defensive with all sorts of excuses. “Well! I am not wrong! I am right on this!” Alas! Upon hearing, well, he clearly recognizes that when he tells you the truth, you respond with excuses, so the next time around he has nothing to say – you are right!

You are right! As mentioned last time, in our Chinese history, there was the story of “Generous asking price for skeleton of stallion.”* Why? Even if his speech is flawed, you still sincerely and respectfully listen to him and, when he believes that you are teachable, then he will teach you. There is much that we are not able to sense, much that goes unnoticed by us – a lot that [we] overlooked. Especially with applying the teachings, you will never relate to it without making comparison. This is my experience.

*[*A generous asking price for skeleton of stallion: a man was looking to buy a stallion without luck, so he offered high price at the marketplace for the skeleton of a dead stallion. Words spread, so a horse breeder came to him with great horses.*

The moral of this story is for us to be sincere practitioners, and more goodness will follow.]

[20B, 12:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P134 L8]

As I have just mentioned to you, when I was first ordained, I heard people said: “Well! Once ordained, one should go into retreat right away.” Thus, I set my mind on going into retreat. However, the experienced practitioners knew that a retreat was not proper [at this point], and they would tell you: “Do not go into retreat yet.” At that time, I thought, “No retreat would mean I can just stay and serve him!” Such was the attitude! But I could not recognize his true intent. So I am telling you now, truthfully enough, I still thought that it was proper! I did not stare at him with wide eyes, and I did not directly tell him this, I could not say it that way. I tried to find all kinds of excuses! He took a look, “Well! Didn’t you say to tell you when you made mistake? When you really made mistakes, you wouldn’t listen. Moreover, if you were

told in a more serious tone, your afflictions arose, and you would mutter behind my back.” The next time he would say: “Fine, fine, fine! You are good, you are fine!” Then for sure you are done with it! We should recognize from this angle, this is definitely no laughing matter.

[20B, 13:27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P135 L1]

So when I reflected on my past mistakes, here many younger generations are making the same mistakes and I don't know how to help them. Not to mention the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, their requirements were even more stringent. It is not about stricter qualifications, but that they are able to help you reach a higher standard! If you can't even achieve this much and you are thinking... if you cannot even move forward a step, yet you actually claim the ability to reach heaven in one single stride, isn't this absurd? So here it is not saying that virtuous teachers are not mindful of us, but that we should evaluate ourselves to see if we have the qualities to abide by their teachings! So, in the beginning, the author didn't specify a teacher's qualities right away. Instead, he explained the characteristics of a qualified disciple! So all of you should not focus on anything else, just set a priority to fulfill the qualifications as a disciple.

[20B, 14:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P135 L7]

“Bodhisattvas for whom teachers care are elevated above the world.” Well! By then, there is nothing in the world that can be compared to this. Don't overlook the responsibilities of the attendant of a virtuous teacher; they get up early in

the morning to clean the teacher's toilet, etc. This is far better than being a president, this is so very true, and it is far better than being a multi-millionaire! "Bodhisattvas who have served and respected their teachers act without forgetting any of the bodhisattva deeds." This is also accurate! This is what should be adopted; there is no need to be timid! When you have wronged, he will be there to remind you. In this environment, he will never allow you to err. "Bodhisattvas whom teachers fully look after are not overcome by bad karma or afflictions." Once negative karma or afflictions cannot overcome you, then you have achieved!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20B, 14:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P135 L13]

And also:

Child of good lineage, the bhagavan buddhas are pleased with bodhisattvas who have engaged in what their teachers teach them.

As long as you abide by the instructions from a virtuous teacher, then "the Bhagavan Buddhas are pleased." What pleases the Bhagavan Buddhas? They are pleased to see your attainment of Buddhahood as soon as possible! If you have the ability to listen to the instructions of virtuous teachers and truly apply it accordingly, of course Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are pleased. So our truthful offering is not to say: today you have cooked a few good dishes, played the Dharma instruments well and chanted well, and followed by offering a good meal to him. With regard to these mundane tastes, not to mention that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not have an appetite for this. Even the smell of deity realms is unbearable to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas! The smell of the deity realms for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is the same as our smells to the deities.

What should be our true offering? To engage and apply according to teachers' teachings, that is it. As we have just mentioned, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are pleased not with our vegetable dishes; they prefer our sincere and respectful "attitude" in offering! This is what you should understand. Thus, they still prefer us to apply earnestly, and we must not say: "Well! In this case, we should not offer." Then you are wrong! This concept is somewhat off... When you have good things today, offer the best; otherwise the bottom line is you still need to play the instrument and chant with greatest respect without any flaw. Yes, provide the best! This concept should be differentiated very clearly. Let's continue,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20B, 16:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P136 L11]

Bodhisattvas who are content not to contradict their teachers' words will come closer to becoming an omniscient one.

Well! Take what your teachers tell you, and do not contradict them. "Content" – this word content is not easy! First, understand it, then keep it in mind for practice and mindfully uphold it without contradicting it. When you do not contradict it, you will "get closer to omniscience." Well! You will come closer and you are doing it right. "An omniscient one" – the Buddha. "The virtuous teachers"... Here, the reference of the "omniscient one" we need to understand it is not referring to the three wisdoms.* Omniscience is the wisdom of the Buddha.

*[*Three wisdoms:*

1. — 一切智 wisdom of emptiness/sravaka and pratyekabuddha knowledge;

2. 道種智 perfection of wisdom/Bodhisattva-knowledge

3. 一切智智 omniscience/Buddha-knowledge]

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P87; 20B, 17:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P137 L3]

Teachers will be closer to one who has no doubt about their words.

Next, it also says that if you have no doubts about the teachers' instructions, then getting closer to them becomes possible. Otherwise, you will think: "Well! He told me this, what is his intention?" Once you have doubts in your mind, then it is hopeless! Our actual practice should be the training of the mind. With one thought of doubt in mind, you will not be able to get closer to the teacher. It is this serious. So this is why the very first practice should be the training of faith. "Faith" is a tool to purify any trace of doubt, this doubt accords with affliction. No matter what approach you have been taught with, your faith toward him must be absolutely firm! Therefore, earlier on, the author taught us the nine attitudes – the attitude like a diamond, the dutiful child, the foothills, a dog, and a ferry. What are the reasons for them? With an attitude like a sweeper, no matter how filthy the tasks are, you feel: Wow! You will still handle it with modesty. Just like the attitude of a dog, no matter how your guru berates you, kicks you, you will not waver. No matter how much difficulty you encounter, you will not retreat and, in your heart, there is not even a trace of doubt! Well! This is the right thing to do. By then, you will become closer to the teacher. What else?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 20B, 18:10; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P137L13]

Bodhisattvas who bring to mind their teachers will fulfill all of their aims.

Not only should you have no doubt, but also keep [your teacher] in your thoughts. “Bring to mind” relates to your mental activity, your initiative. Constantly think: Well, you definitely must not leave the teacher! Never ever leave the virtuous teacher! Normally, what is the state of our mind? It is an ethically neutral state. That is actually the time to strive hard! Thus, this is why it is called “reflecting.” That is, constantly have the thought of: Well! I want to be closer to the teacher. If you view your teacher as Amitabha Buddha, then you say “Na Mo Amitabha Buddha.” These two words “Na Mo” have a special meaning! If you really mindfully and sincerely take refuge in Amitabha Buddha wholeheartedly, with this intent, then the two words of “Na Mo” can be done away with. Otherwise, include the two words of “Na Mo,” which is to “bring to mind their teachers.”

[20B, 18:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P138 L7]

If you can earnestly apply in this manner, then Amitabha Buddha is in this world. You don't need to wait until arriving at the Pure Land, which may be decades from now. You can experience it now. Why? No Buddha is an exception; all Buddhas follow the same path. Like our Teacher Shakyamuni, “Vairocana Buddha* is omnipresent, the place he resides is the realm of eternally quiescent light.” It has been clearly stated! Buddhas are everywhere! Our Shakyamuni Buddha will appear, and Amitabha Buddha will appear. Because the doubt in our minds has not been purified, they remain distant. Encountering any trace of arising condition, we will think: “alas, this is not nutritious

enough!” At that time, the loss is ours! When the thought of your disrespect toward the precepts, having this arising thought is the same as having doubt! Among the precepts you were taught, what are you disciplining? Discipline your attachment, hostility, and ignorance, discipline your afflictive views and afflictive sentiments. But, at that given moment, you are [usually] in the midst of affliction, right? This is definitely true. Thus, mindfully chanting Buddha’s name is not difficult! The difficult part unbeknownst to the reason for chanting. If you can truly understand, then cultivating accordingly is absolutely the easiest, happiest, and most convenient task. We will stop here for today.

*[*Vairocana Buddha is the Dharma form of Shakyamuni Buddha]*

[20B, 20:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P139 L1]

Please turn to the Lamrim [page 88]. The root of studying Buddha Dharma: now we know it is to rely on the virtuous teacher. As for relying on the virtuous teacher, our earlier discussion already provided a basic concept. With respect to this, often there are some fellow practitioners who have just joined. If he occasionally attends the class as an observer, then it doesn’t matter. Otherwise, for those fellow practitioners who joined later and have missed the previous sections, they need to listen from the beginning to make it up. This way, the value of this study will arise, and one will be able to obtain the complete conceptual framework, this is very crucial! Looks like there are 3 of you, 3 people. After this session, you should start from the beginning to catch up the missed portion. Today we will continue on [v.1 page 88 line 4].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 20B, 21:17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P139 L7]

And also the *Sutra of Showing the Tathagata's Inconceivable Secret* says:

Sons and daughters of good lineage, rely upon, become emotionally closer to, serve, and venerate the guru with great respect. If you do so, your thought will be virtuous through hearing virtuous teachings, whereby your practice as well will be virtuous. Then, through creating virtuous karma and becoming virtuous,

Up to now, it quotes another sutra to tell us this: regardless of whether or not you are a son or daughter of good lineage – for the term “good lineage,” we now have further understanding. In the past, we often read from Sutras about sons and daughters of good lineage! We often randomly apply the term of sons and daughters of good lineage, now with our understanding of the meaning of this “good lineage,” there are different levels. Generally, our term of “sons and daughters of good lineage” is a verbal habit, and also forms a friendly impression. Here, we understand that this “good lineage” comprises characteristics of persons studying and practicing Dharma. Then what is the qualification? It has to be according to the aforementioned abandonment of the three faults of a vessel, reliance on the six ideas, having the defining characteristics of the student, and being endowed with the four characteristics of the student. Thus, the qualification of “sons and daughters of good lineage” is achieved. So this point is very crucial. Usually, we say that we are studying Buddha Dharma, yet why are we unable to obtain benefits? That is due to the lack of understanding of the term of “good lineage.” Or perhaps we should put it this way – for this

“good lineage,” how much of this should be achieved in our minds before we are able to accept Buddha’s teachings? Most people lack this preparation and went ahead to beseech the teachings. Thus, the benefit will not arise. Therefore, it is required for those fellow practitioners who have not listened to the earlier sessions to make them up by listening to the previous recordings. By then, you will know [the answer to]: where are my qualifications? If your qualifications fall short, it is very obvious and clear that even the falling nectar will not help us at all.

[20B, 23.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P140 L8]

So now, for these qualified sons and daughters of good lineage who are truly studying and applying Buddha Dharma, the first thing is to be close to the virtuous teacher. To be closer to the virtuous teacher, one should absolute pay respect to the teacher, with a mentality of relying on him and serving him. So long as you are able to do all of these, then the remaining benefits will follow. What are they? “Your thought will be virtuous through hearing virtuous teachings.” The reason a virtuous teacher is able to become one is because he can properly deliver the essence of the teaching of the Three Jewels to our minds. This is the virtuous teaching. Because you listened to this virtuous teaching and, as a result, your perception conforms to Buddha’s, hence “your thought will be virtuous.” This is the primary concept.

[20B, 24.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P140 L14]

What is our usual state of mind? We can examine right now, a prompt check up. Now, while listening to the teachings, the better ones will listen to the Buddha Dharma

with full concentration, this is known as virtuous attitude. But when you are not listening to Buddha Dharma, what is your state of mind? Our muddle-headedness is a sign of “delusion.” This is not even at the level of subtle ignorance! This is only the coarse state of ignorance, which is in the state of dim-wittedness. However, one may feel pretty good about it. Based on this, how can you apply the teaching? Then, when you are not in the state of dim-wittedness, when triggered by external conditions, you will act with either attachment or hostility. When you see favorable conditions with joy, you accord with attachment. When you see unfavorable conditions, you react with disgust, and then this is in accord with hostility. Therefore, when your mind is excited, you are either attached or hostile. When dispirited and depressed, you react with laxity or drowsiness. These are all the 3 mental poisons; and they are all signs of contamination.

[20B, 25.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P141 L7]

Often we don't even notice this, let alone the situations mentioned earlier. Even if you are chanting Buddha's name, although you are verbally chanting, the mind is nevertheless in a state of distraction or laxity. Is this “virtue”? Not even close, if not for the guidance of the virtuous teacher, this would be unknown [to us]! And in order to have the guidance of the teacher, it still requires that we have the requisite qualifications as a student. Only then will you be able to absorb the instruction of the teacher. Otherwise, whatever they say about you, you will still be unconvinced. Therefore, the required qualification is needed; this sequence must be flawless! At that time, due to your preparation ahead of time, you will mindfully pay respect. And this virtuous teacher has to be truly endowed with the

proper qualifications. The most qualified virtuous teacher must be Buddha or the Bodhisattvas of the tenth level and above. Even the lower level ones are those that have entered the Bodhisattva levels, of course their advise to you will be perfectly suitable. Hence, you will develop proper recognition and transform our usual tendency of accord to the three mental poisons – invert to virtuous motivation. As for all of our deeds, what is the key guidance? It is our motivation! Once your intention is transformed, your behavior will also become “virtuous practice.” Because the attitude is inverted, of course the practice will become virtuous.

[20B, 27:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P142 L2]

Thus, what is our usual motivation? Sitting there in a state of dim-wittedness, feeling that there is nothing to do but sleep. When someone comes over, thus everyone chats happily. When something gets your attention, well! Engage with great joy, just like that. Otherwise, when something disturbs you, the hostile feeling will arise within you. This is due to our thoughts being immersed in the three mental poisons; naturally our deeds become contaminated and non-virtuous. This is the difference between the positive and negative. Due to such practice, what are the three karmic doors of the body, speech, and mind engaged in? The engagement is virtuous karma! Engaging in virtuous karma. With respect to the details on karma, it will be discussed in the karma section where the Dharma characteristics and concordant behavior will be clearly distinguished.

[21A, 00:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P145 L1]

You will become clearly aware: what kind of karma I am engaging in now – tainted, contaminated, or pure and clean. It will become very clear. Because of the virtuous karma you have created, based on the aforementioned [teachings], you will naturally “become virtuous.” All aspects will gradually, gradually move in this direction, all causes, and effects, etc. The sequential order is this clear. This is for yourself, completely for your own sake. What is next?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 21A, 00:37; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P145 L4]

you will please your virtuous friends. You also will not bring suffering upon others or yourself because you will not create nonvirtuous karma but will only cultivate virtue. As a result of guarding others and yourself, you will complete the path to unsurpassed enlightenment, and therefore will be able to work for the welfare of living beings who have entered wrong paths. Thus, once bodhisattvas have relied on the guru, they will complete all their collections of good qualities.

If you can be like this, and everything is virtuous, then you will become virtuous. What else? What is the most important influence on your behavior? The companions you are with. Because you become virtuous, naturally, you accord with those virtuous friends. Those virtuous friends will be delighted and you will like them, too. Conversely, sorry to say but our preference is for everyone to be happy, well! Chatting and joking around, and gossiping about others – these are non-virtuous friends. So, truthfully, between the self and others, there are two key issues. Since

you are virtuous, the friends around you and your teachers, of course, are virtuous. And then your companions, those virtuous companions, all possess good qualities.

[21A, 01:55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P146 L5]

In such circumstances, you will not engage in misdeeds, you will only cultivate virtue. We often say: when we get to Pure Land, there is no place for you to engage in non-virtues. Well! This is exactly the situation here. If you can ascertain this point, although you remain in this saha world [as opposed to Pure Land], where can you commit non-virtuous actions? In this world, not only is there no place for nonvirtuous deeds, there is more advantage than Pure Land. In the Pure Land, true, there is no place for you to engage in sin. However, it is very difficult for you to multiply merits. I am not saying that there is no increase; of course, merits will grow constantly. But compared to those true practitioners who properly abide by the teachings in the saha world, it is hard, much harder. Why? The environment is not conducive to trigger the causes. Once you are in the Pure Land, the force [for virtue] is not strong. Whereas in this saha world, if you practice properly, the nonvirtuous conditions will not only be unable to affect you, but they will also transform into favorable conditions when you encounter adversity. This is absolutely not possible in Pure Land. These are the key points for being where we are.

[21A, 03:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P146 L13]

Where do all benefits come from? Well, they arise from relying on a virtuous teacher! To rely on a virtuous teacher, you must be endowed with the qualifications. Upon doing so,

then “you will not bring suffering upon others or yourself.” Why is that? It is because you are aligned with the Dharma. What is the characteristic of the Dharma? It can purify contamination and affliction. Affliction and contamination are the roots of all suffering. Once purified, of course, you will either cause yourself or others to suffer. By then, it is truly “guarding others and yourself.” That is truly protecting self and others.

[21A; 03:47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P147 L3]

In our world, there are protections, too. Well! In my country, if you follow the laws in the country, this country’s laws will protect you. In a smaller setting or group, even the brothers of a gang, it is the same. If you join my group, you will be protected. However, it is flawed, it is not complete. And in all the worldly protections, to gain one small advantage, the cost is immeasurable. Buddha Dharma is just the opposite. Initially, it will be hard work, but the protection is truly perfect and thorough. And, in the end, the reward is the best – it is much greater than the cost, much greater. In other words, it may be a bit arduous during your practice, but this effort is very small compared to the effect. Now, we lack the understanding of this concept and become attached to immediate advantage. This is harmful. In sincere practice, there is suffering at the present moment, but the rewarding harvest is remarkable, great, and perfect! If you can apply accordingly, that will be the path to achieving perfect and unsurpassable enlightenment. This is your true engagement on the path. Once you engage in it, you will advance step by step.

[21A; 05:01; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P147 L12]

So if you are able to do this, then you “therefore will be able to work for the welfare of living beings who have entered wrong paths.” Of course, when we practice the teaching now, it is certainly good! With your ability to do so, then you can help others. This is truly spreading the teachings to benefit others! Genuine promulgation of the teaching to benefit others arises from here. This is how you benefit self and others. If you cannot even apply it yourself, what benefit will there be? Isn’t this very obvious? As for personal achievement, it is mentioned above.

[21A; 05:29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P148 L1]

“Once Bodhisattvas have relied on guru” – for those who are sincere about training on the perfect Buddha path, those who are inspired to benefit self and others, these are called Bodhisattvas. They should definitely rely on great virtuous teachers. Upon doing so, “they will complete all their collections of good qualities.” This is necessary at the causal stage of the training in Buddha Dharma. This is quoted from this sutra [*Sutra of Showing the Tathagata’s Inconceivable Secret*]. This concept is described above. Then, the teachers of the lineage validate this for us by quoting from the sutras. These sequential steps are very clear.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 21A; 06:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P148 L5]

Furthermore, by respecting and serving your teachers you exhaust karma whose effects you would otherwise experience in the miserable realms. Your action of

serving the teacher expends these miserable effects and replaces them with only slight harm to your body and mind in this lifetime, either in actuality or in dreams.

The above mainly illustrates the accumulation of the collections. We know that accumulating merits and clearing the obscurations are two in one or one in two. Just like when we make a living, once you have earned money before you pay off debt, it may seem like nothing was earned – it was used to pay off debt – but, actually, you did earn money. Upon clearing away your debt, that will be when you will be purely accumulating the collections. Of course there are more detailed differences, but there are shared common points.

[21A; 07:00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P148 L11]

So the above mainly speaks of the positive side. Next, it speaks from the opposite side. Many of your obscurations, by relying on and serving the virtuous teacher... under these conditions, you were originally destined for the miserable realms because of your negative karma. Alas, it is very dreadful! Very scary! As for this point, we must frequently study diligently and thus comprehend the dreadfulness of the three miserable realms. Otherwise, despite speaking of three miserable realms, we nevertheless will have irrelevant feelings about them. Thus, the mental force to encourage and motivate us will not arise, and, unknowingly, we will engage in misdeeds. Once you abide by the teaching, that will be the time you truly sense the horror of the three miserable realms, and then your practice becomes sincere. Due to your ability to seriously practice, the causes of downfall to lower realms can be removed. This is the greatest benefit at the present time. What about the past

[causes]? You can also repent to purify them. This is the greatest advantage to us, the most important task. The primary application of Buddha Dharma is this [repentance].

[21A; 08:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P149 L6]

So due to your ability to serve the virtuous teacher now, even though you were essentially destined to dreadful downfall, well, now you will only experience minor physical and mental illness. Harm to the body is physical, and harm to the mind is feeling afflicted and tormented. This is how it is. It is such a slight harm that even dreaming of these miserable conditions will enable the purification of karma in the three miserable realms. What an advantage! This will be a great advantage! At this juncture, if you have read about the sufferings in three miserable realms from the sutras and commentaries, this is a good opportunity for contemplation. Otherwise, wait until the later discussion of the three miserable realms, and come back to review this section. By then, the understanding will arise.

[21A; 09:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P149 L12]

At the same time, you might want to try this out: when it is very hot, stay away from using a fan or air conditioning. In fact, fans and air conditioning are modern inventions! You were told to bask in the sun and couldn't tolerate it, when it is cold, you were told to wear thin clothes, and you might feel terrible. To compare this feeling with hell, wow! It is like heaven, definitely like being in the heaven. Yet we feel terrible, well, any speck [of discomfort] becomes unbearable, just like that. When we eat a little less, it is unbearable. For hungry ghosts, they go without food for many eons, just like that! Out of food for eons! Now, you are able to serve the

virtuous teacher to eliminate those tremendous sufferings though minor discomfort. In other words, this investment gives great returns! Next, continuing.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 21A; 10:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P150 L4]

In addition, the benefits of respecting and serving your teachers are tremendous, such as a collection of virtue which surpasses even the roots of virtue that you derive from making offerings to limitless buddhas, and so forth.

He then makes a conclusion. The virtuous roots from offering and serving Buddha are incredibly huge! Now, his offering is not just to one but to the virtuous root of limitless Buddhas. What does “surpass” mean? It means to overcome. Often, we talk about the concept of surpassing. For instance, the fluorescent light, when the sun comes out, the fluorescent light is surpassed by the sunlight. It is overcome or, in other words, totally cannot be seen. Now what? With your virtuous roots gained from offering to the limitless Buddhas, as long as you offer to the virtuous teacher of yours, the merits will surpass [the former]. Wow! With this, sometimes it is hard for us to imagine. Aside from talking about offering to the Buddha, we can take many examples from the sutra. Many people did not offer to Buddha but to an arhat, a pratyekabuddha, or even a practitioner who abided by the teaching properly. Ah! The merit is incredibly huge. We mentioned about Venerable Anurudha (阿耨樓陀) before. Through offering a pratyekabuddha a bowl of inferior rice (糲子飯) 91 billion eons ago – he offered a bowl of inferior rice to a pratyekabuddha. This inferior rice was not even regular rice!

Then, in 91 billion eons! He was reborn in the realms of heaven or humans and was never poor again. So you see, how can a pratyekabuddha be compared to a Buddha? Then, if it is immeasurable Buddhas, the merits are remarkably great. Now, you offer to a virtuous teacher, surpass it! This is absolutely true; this is described everywhere in the sutras.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 21A; 12:00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P151 L1]

As the *Sutra of Ksitigarbha* says:

It cites from the *Sutra of Ksitigarbha*:

Those whom the teachers care for will purify the karma that would otherwise cause them to wander through the miserable realms for ten million limitless eons. They purify this karma with harm to their bodies and minds in this lifetime. This harm includes sickness such as an infectious disease with fever and calamities such as famine. They may purify their karma by merely undergoing something as little as a dream or a scolding.

Suppose a virtuous teacher takes you into his care. This is with regard to a genuine virtuous teacher. If you rely on a virtuous teacher and the teacher says: “Well, well, you are ready,” so you rely on him and he supports you. In order to truly have his support, then under this circumstance, the first thing to talk about is the elimination of negative obscurations. Initially, what do the nonvirtuous have to go through? “To wander through the miserable realms for ten million limitless eons.” Such negative karma, which is very dreadful, is

tremendously dreadful! Even if this life of ours were filled with torment, the longest it would be would not exceed 100 years. Whereas being in the midst of miserable realms, it is easily measured by “eons.” The number of limitless eons is hard for you to imagine, inconceivable!

[21A; 13:18; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P151 L11]

So I often say we might want to give it a try, take a knife to cut a small opening on one hand and try to sprinkle some salt on it. We wouldn't be able to tolerate it for even one minute, not even one minute! Whereas this feeling, compared to the misery in the lower realms, is many times better, but you are unable to conceive how much more comfortable this is! And what about now? A nonvirtuous karma is much greater than this, due to your serving of and offering to a virtuous teacher. Those negative karmic effects that we are in the midst of now, that is, our minor illnesses and suffering or even some hunger – in other words, minor physical and mental discomfort – exhaust [the negative karma]!

[21A; 14:01; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P152 L3]

So in the previous sections, we were repeatedly told that when we rely on the virtuous teacher, we should “take it as a privilege, not a burden!” We shouldn't ever rely with the attitude of feeling that this is not good, this is inferior, the living condition is uncomfortable, the food is not enjoyable, it is either too hot or too cold, which is unacceptable. All of these are the signs of our deep corruption. This is a great detriment to us! Other than this, it also includes getting a

scolding, when a virtuous teacher scolds us [we can't take it], just like this.

[21A; 14:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P152 L7]

As for scolding, I suggest you read the biographies of great Masters of the past. All of these are illustrated again and again. Actually, aside from scolding, there are many other sufferings – physical and mental. These are to our greatest advantage, and our greatest privilege. “They may purify their karma by merely undergoing something as little as a dream.” This is one part of eliminating obscuration. What about the accumulation of collections? Next:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 21A; 15:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P152 L10]

They produce more roots of virtue in one morning than those who give gifts to, worship, or observe precepts from limitless tens of millions of buddhas. Those who respect and serve their gurus are endowed with unimaginable good qualities.

Regarding accumulating collections, well, the sutra validates it right away. You are in “limitless eons” – the virtuous roots in the infinite Buddha realms – engaging in what? Generosity, ethical discipline, offering, etc. so many of them – take up the precepts correctly, there are all sorts of virtue. Each one is a remarkable deed, excellent deed! Now, as long as you serve the virtuous teacher for half a day, just for half a day, the merits accumulated will surpass offerings for limitless tens of millions of Buddhas. There are many advantages. This merit is inconceivable, hard for you to imagine, incredibly abundant! This quote from *Sutra of Ksitigarbha* continues:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P88; 21A; 16:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P153 L4]

And also:

Notice that all of the buddhas' immeasurable good qualities of transforming others' minds arise from this proper reliance on the teacher. Therefore, rely on, become close to, serve, and venerate the guru, just as you would the buddhas.

All Buddhas' good qualities and clairvoyance, in other words, the achievements of all Buddhas, from where do they arise? They all arise from this [reliance on a virtuous teacher], this we should know. It is all from relying on a virtuous teacher. It was briefly covered earlier. This point is what we should definitely recognize. However, the aforementioned is a general outline. Before we have a proper understanding, as for this point, [we can] refer to the aforementioned sutras and commentaries imparted by Buddha and Bodhisattvas to help increase and cultivate our faith. Once we continue to study, we will truthfully recognize, oh! This is why it is this way. By then, our faith will be strengthened and our merits will increase. That is the time when you will become steadfast. For now, doubt may arise and you may think, "Is it really so?" I would rather that you had this doubt then follow it by striving to seek the answer. Don't just confusedly say, "Ok, got it, I do believe." This is useless, no use at all! For true faith is when you indeed recognize this concept properly and are clearly affected by it. Then you will be unwavering under any circumstances and it is genuine. We cannot just verbally express our faith. After saying this, when we later encounter a little situation, alas, you are again filled with affliction. If you do not criticize the

virtuous teacher, it is considered pretty good. This is totally a superficial passing thought, that is all.

[21A; 18:15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P154 L3]

Regarding this point, well! With proper recognition, you will abide by it accordingly. However, prior to this recognition, once we develop faith, the willingness to engage will arise, too. So what should we do now? Rely upon, abide by it, and offer to virtuous teachers as though we were serving Buddha. The sutra was used to illustrate this earlier, and then a commentary was referenced. In other words, what did the Buddha teach and what did the Bodhisattvas say? [The author] clearly explains this to us layer by layer to enhance our recognition and increase our faith.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21A; 19:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P154 L8]

Also, the Garland of Birth Stories states:

Any intelligent person should not be distant from excellent beings

And should rely on these virtuous beings in a disciplined manner.

Once you are close to them, particles of their good qualities

Will stick to you automatically.

Under any circumstance, “should”, in other words, one should never ever be distant from the virtuous teachers. These “excellent beings” include your teacher and your fellow practitioners. That is to say, to practice the teaching, you should never depart from virtuous teacher. Once you become distant, achievement becomes impossible. Unless you have already attained a certain level – the first level

Bodhisattva and above – then distance is permissible, but it does not mean that you are always apart! Not apart all the time. Actually, once the first level Bodhisattva has been attained, that person is constantly relying on a virtuous teacher. However, in our eyes – using our standards to measure it – Bodhisattvas of the first level and above are capable of being away from Buddha and Bodhisattvas to be in the midst of sentient beings. In fact, at that time, all living beings would be virtuous teachers [of the first level Bodhisattvas].

[21A; 20:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P155 L2]

For this, I believe we may not understand it very well. Why are the sentient beings the virtuous teachers of the Bodhisattvas? What do Bodhisattvas engage in? [They] extensively engage in the six perfections. If you are in the midst of the Buddha realm, is there still a need for you, as a Bodhisattva, to apply generosity? That is right! It has to be in this contaminated land, amidst the poverty and suffering! For those who lack wealth, you provide wealth. For those who lack teachings, you provide the teachings. For those with fear, you support them with the gift of fearlessness. Upon your entering the Pure Land, you will receive generosity from Buddha! Because you are here practicing generosity in this contaminated world, thus you attain your merit. That is why those sentient beings are your virtuous teachers! However, this is for those at the Bodhisattva level. As for us, it seems that the Bodhisattva has parted from Buddha. That is why I mentioned that, by then, even if we see him left the virtuous teacher, actually he is still relying on the virtuous teacher. This is what we should know. So under any circumstance, absolutely do not be apart from “excellent beings,” never ever!

[21A; 21:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P155 L10]

So what should be done? In our present condition and throughout our future learning, “rely on these virtuous beings in a disciplined manner.” What is a disciplined manner? Usually, we refer to it as ethical discipline, precepts. In a broader sense, it is all of Buddha Dharma. In a narrower scope, it is precepts. As for the broader definition, discipline starts from precepts. Why do we want to practice the teachings? Because our deeds are all contaminated, filled with non-virtue, and aligned to our tendencies – I want this, I like that, I have to have it, and this suits my taste. Pardon, these are all contaminations, tainted tendencies. Now that you have a proper understanding, mindfully think: alas, this is not right! I am conforming to my previous views again. This is going along with my confusion – it is either an afflictive sentiment or an afflictive view. The afflictive view is my perception. The afflictive sentiment is attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, etc. Identify it properly then tame it. This is known as discipline, also known as precepts or ethical discipline. The true application of precepts is this! So how do you know? How do you recognize it? Often, we think that we take it for granted, how do you know that [you are] wrong? If you do not have the guidance of a virtuous teacher, it is not going to happen! So never be distant from a virtuous teacher. He guides you, provides you with proper recognition and then discipline. Abide by the concept of discipline to properly tame our contaminated actions. At this point, your deeds will be transformed. So this act itself is “disciplined manner” – which requires relying on a virtuous teacher!

[21A; 23:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P156 L7]

So it says, “Once you are close to them,” well! It is because you are close to the virtuous teachers that the “particles of their good qualities”, these good qualities... the author uses the word “particles,” how wonderful! Often, for many things that we engage in with sincere care, the result is rewarding. Now, if you rely on a virtuous teacher, you constantly... wherever [you] may be, the merit increases. Just like the dust we encounter everywhere, now he encounters merits everywhere, so wonderful! So it is absolutely true that if you do it right – rely on a virtuous teacher with proper service and offering – then the merits will multiply constantly 24 hours a day, even while eating or sleeping. It’s like dust; you cannot get away from it. Wherever you go, it sticks to you automatically and you will be exposed to it. It’s that great! Even if you don’t do it on purpose, the particles of good qualities will stick to you, so wonderful!

[21A; 24:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P156 L13]

“Will stick to you automatically”! Well! Hey, that is excellent. For us now, you strive so hard, yet whatever you endeavor in turns into a nonvirtuous deed. What is the reason for this? It’s right here. The sign of application is very clear! The description of the sign of application is very clear! However, I want to explain this here. Although the sign of application is recognized, while listening [to the teaching], you feel that it is indeed great. But it does not mean we can achieve it right away! Why? It is due to our tendencies from beginningless time. As long as you hear with delight and understanding, at that time, you will immediately feel: wow, it is so valuable. I believe that those of you beginners sitting in the back, you may consider yourself lucky to have encountered such wonderful and perfect teaching from the

very beginning, though you may not recognize its true preciousness. In the front row, for some of the senior members, I believe the feeling is quite different. To compare past experience with those of the present, upon hearing, wow! Immediately realize why it is: You realize the reason why, even though you were inspired to apply the teaching, but were unable to advance. So the reason [of identifying our latent propensity] is this clear and evident! That is how it works.

[21A; 25:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P157 L6]

So there are many who wish to apply the teaching for a long time but, after a while, it seems flavorless. They could not find the entrance, did not have the heart to give up. They tried to advance but were unable to. Now this section teaches you the reason very clearly, very obvious. Yet this reason is not empty talk, it points out each sign of mental application specifically and clearly. If you are not seriously contemplating [the teachings], let it be – it won't help. But if you reflect sincerely, you will immediately sense it, ah! There is a physical and mental effect on you, that is how it works. In order to contemplate sincerely, what are the required conditions? In the preceding teachings, we were taught to eliminate the faults of the three vessels and to adopt the six ideas, as well as to possess the characteristics of a student. These are the required conditions.

[21A; 26:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P157 L12]

So the preceding are Buddha's sutra and Bodhisattva's commentaries, followed by ancient great teachers' experiential knowledge. They instruct us in these teachings, layer by layer from the profound, taking the meaning deeper

from one level to another, from deeper to shallow and vice versa. What is the purpose of going from profound to shallow and shallow to profound? To explain the reasoning! The reasoning is first explained then validated by quoting from commentary and sutra. The same thing applies to the other way around. Once the reasoning on the sutras is clarified, then broken down stepwise. Because of the differences in the students' abilities and levels, it will gradually become clearer. Those advanced ones can understand the sutra by hearing the teaching. If they cannot, then they understand through the explanation of Bodhisattva's commentaries. If they still cannot, then the teachers of the lineage are closest to us, or we refer to them as being closest to us. This is why the text repeatedly [explains the same concept], this gradation also has its specific meaning in it. So what did the masters of the lineages say?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21A; 27:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P158 L4]

Bo-do-wa said:

For the most part, we are in great danger of becoming like a worn animal skin. Just as when you drag a worn skin over the ground, debris sticks but gold coins do not, so it is that if you rely on teachers only occasionally their good qualities do not stick to you but each slight fault does. Therefore, to be successful, rely continuously on your teachers.

It says that we are like the faults of ragged clothes, what about the ragged clothes? When dragging worn clothes, a worn animal skin – normally our clothes are fine. But if the bottom is torn and dragging on the ground,

wherever it is dragged it picks up debris and the mess will all be picked up. We are much better off now, with tiles on the ground that have been cleaned very well. If we were to go to the countryside, there is so much dirt on the ground and cow dung, what a mess. If you go there, these will stick to you. Instead of being stuck with good stuff, you will not be able to have good things stick to you. So our present state is the same, the good qualities of the virtuous teacher cannot stick to you whereas a tiny speck of fault easily contaminates you.

[21A; 28:27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P158 L12]

Why did he say this? It was his personal experience that also came from observing while teaching the disciples. So how do we apply this now? Just like what was discussed earlier, let's review it now. If you are not endowed with the qualification, if the true good qualities of the virtuous teachers were in front of you, you would not be able to see them. However, you would totally see any tiny speck of faults in the virtuous teacher. And then you would grumble within, followed by defaming him. Well! The original intent to rely on the virtuous teacher is to enable us to purify all defilements. It turns out that, due to your lack of qualification, he told you this should not be engaged in, that should not be done. This has to be done, that should be cast aside. Essentially, all of this was to help your practice of the teachings. But now, due to this unbearable feeling: "Well, why is it that this person is compassionate, and this virtuous teacher is not kind..." The grumbling in your mind not only will not help you purify to advance step by step, rather you have created immeasurable transgressions and will descend from here. Thus, the text speaks of worn animal

skin, so the good qualities will not stick to you, but if there is any slight fault, you will have a part of it.

[21B; 0:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P161 L1]

Sigh, how dreadful! So here it tells us “if you rely on teachers only occasionally, their good qualities do not stick to you but each slight fault does. Therefore, to be successful, rely continuously on your teachers.” The aforementioned concept, well, you occasionally scratch the surface, and that is of no use, useless! Below, it will explain in more detail. Thus, we will not go into a deeper discussion here. These are the benefits of relying on a virtuous teacher. And what is next - what are the faults of not relying on a virtuous teacher?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 00:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P161 L5]

e. The faults of not relying on the teacher

If you have taken someone as your teacher and then your method of reliance is wrong, not only will you be harmed by much madness and sickness in this lifetime, but in future lifetimes as well you will experience immeasurable suffering in miserable realms for an immeasurable period of time.

First, it reveals to us the primary principle. If you are thinking of relying on him, imploring him to be your teacher, yet you can't properly rely on him, what would the situation be? “Not only will you be harmed by much madness and sickness in this lifetime,” you will immediately experience these partial effects! Since you have engaged in immeasurable negative karma, what about in the future? In future lifetimes, the downfall to miserable realms will occur. The duration is immeasurable and the suffering is

unbearable. This is followed by further explanation. The text quotes from the sutra first.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 01:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P162 L4]

The *Tantra Bestowing the Initiation of Vajrapani* states:

This quotation is from this Tantra scripture.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 01:40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P162 L6]

“Bhagavan, what sort of fruition is there for those who reproach their masters?”

This scripture is a dialogue between Buddha and Vajrapani. Vajrapani is also known as Mahasthamaprapta (大勢至菩薩) – he is the main protector of Tantrayana. Vajrapani says, “Buddha! If someone were to reproach his master” – the referenced masters are of several categories. In general, there are five: ordination, precept, teaching, scriptural instruction, and reliance. However, earlier in this text, the author told us even when you heard a verse of four lines. Actually, once you have a true understanding, everyone is our teacher and enables your achievement as a Buddha! Devadetta was one of Buddha’s greatest masters. We all wish to follow in Buddha’s steps and, beginning from our virtuous teachers, advance step by step and eventually, everyone is our teacher. That will be the time of attaining our achievement. Now we only look at our immediate presence – that is our teachers. So [Vajrapani] asked, “Buddha! If someone were to reproach his teacher, what sort of fruition is there?” In other words, what will be the effect of this negative cause?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 03:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P163 L2]

The Bhagavan answered, “Vajrapani, do not ask this question, for the answer will frighten the world, including the deities.

Ah! Upon hearing this, the Bhagavan immediately felt, alas! And replied, “Vajrapani, do not even mention such things! Your mention of it is very frightening! Regardless of whom – deity or human – all will be frightened by this! However, there is a need to reveal some to you!” Buddha said,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 03:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P163 L6]

However, Lord of Secrets, I will say something. O hero, listen carefully:

Only those who have courage can listen to this. Ordinary ones would be too frightened to hear it.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 03:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P163 L8]

**As I have explained, any of the unbearable hells
Resulting from such karma as the deeds of
immediate retribution
Are said to be the abode of those who reproach
their teachers.
They must stay there for limitless eons.
Therefore, never reproach your master
On any occasion.”**

[Buddha] commented, let me tell you! For one who reproaches his master, what will happen? He will fall to the unrelenting hell – that is his destination. This is about the location and as for the duration, it is “limitless eons” and the suffering is hard for you to imagine! Therefore, under any circumstance, any condition, never reproach your master. So Buddha also told us, if one can’t handle the monastic lifestyle, never ever say, alas, that place is not good enough! One should say, “I lack the qualification now, I can only go back home and work at it. When I am ready, I will come back again.” The same applies to us now, in case one is unable to stay, the best approach is to confess by saying, “Alas! I lack qualification now.” Then leave. This is the best way, the best solution. In fact, it is the best way to protect yourself! So the above quote is from the sutra, and the next is from the *Fifty Verses*, which is composed by a Bodhisattva [Asvaghosa v.1 p.84]. *Fifty Verses on the Guru* is a commentary.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P89; 21B; 05:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P164 L4]

Also the *Fifty Verses on the Guru* says:

**You who despise the master—
You greatly confused person—
Will die by poison, demons, infectious disease,
Leprosy, contagious fever, or other illnesses.
You will also go to a hell
After being killed by a king, or a fire,
Or by poisonous snakes, water, dakas, thieves,
Demons, or deceptive spirits.**

The preceding section says that if you despise the master, that is the greatest confusion. It is the deed of greatest ignorance. Then what suffering will arise? With all these: the

immediate retributions are “infectious disease...or other illnesses.” Anyway, all kinds of worldly terrible things may happen or will eventually occur in portions or its entirety. Then after death, one will fall to the great hells of living beings [v.1 ch.10 p.163].

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 05:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P164 L10]

**Never disturb in any way
The minds of the masters.
For, if you are confused and do so,
You will definitely roast in a hell.
It is explained that those who despise
Their masters will abide
In any of the frightful hells that have been
explained—
Such as the Unrelenting.**

Hence, under any circumstance, never disturb the minds of the masters. The text specifically mentioned not to disturb the minds of the masters. In other words, when serving the teachers, you must be willing to compromise and abide by the nine attitudes of serving the teacher. Observe what the teachers delight in, and you accept compromises to understand him. This is the proper approach. If you lack this understanding due to ignorance, although we understood this concept above, yet in fact, we often can't handle it and are unable to yield. That is still due to our ignorance - we are dominated by ignorance. If you engage in [disturbing teachers' minds] due to ignorance, sorry to say that downfall is certain – for sure to downfall. Descend to where? To the unrelenting hell. Thus we should pay attention.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 07:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P165 L5]

Speaking of this I remembered something about this [monastery], I feel very pleased to discuss it with you all here. One morning, I got here right before [the morning session]. It was not time yet, so everyone was arriving at the prayer hall, either prostrating to Buddha or lining up. One fellow monastic in the back pressed the fan to circulate the air, because he felt hot, too. At that time, I did not know why, not necessarily looking at [him], just turned around to take a look and he immediately turned off the fan. I was very impressed right away, why? That day I didn't think about it, upon reflecting on it later: every time I saw abbot Guanghua come out, I always feel that he is our most important spiritual support. Based on my understanding, everything about this place, as long as he is around, our reliance is always him. You notice he is very ill and comes [to the prayer hall] with a weak physical condition, how can you turn on the fan? It happened a few times in the past. However, I sensed everybody is pretty good about trying to redirect the fan away from him. Yet the draft was still pretty strong. I thought about mentioning it a few times. That morning, upon seeing [the above reaction], I was very touched.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 08:31; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P166 L1]

Therefore, we usually don't pay much attention [to details], especially for the fellow practitioner who turned the fan on and off. Recently I have seen that several of you here in the audience are obviously applying the teachings upon hearing them. What is important for us now is to practice. Hence, as long as we are gradually improving, naturally

these conditions will have a positive effect. This is the true benefit of our studying the teachings as a group.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 09:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P166 L5]

Also, a citation from the *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the “Black Enemy of Yama”*, composed by the great adept Ratnakarasanti, states:

Next, the text still abides by the order of: sutra, commentary, and quotes from great teachers. The *Difficult Points* commentary by the great adept [Ratnakarasanti] also “quotes from sutra.”

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 09:22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P166 L8]

**Someone who hears even a single verse
And does not conceive its speaker to be his or her
guru
Will be reborn one hundred times as a dog
And then will take rebirth in a bad caste.**

Not to mention your single-pointed and earnest imploring of him to be your teacher, even if you only heard one verse from him. In the text earlier [v.1 p.82], the quote from *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* presents several examples. So many references are quoted from the sutras to enhance the explanation. Even if you only hear one verse, if you do not respect him or do not view him as the Buddha, then you will fall to miserable realms. You “will be reborn one hundred times as a dog.” Wow! One hundred lifetimes as a dog is a long time! Once that cycle ends, you “then will take rebirth in a bad caste.” It is still in a lower caste, in a degraded state.

The preciousness of the teaching is unsurpassed. What is the reason for our lack of understanding now? It is due to our weighty afflictions. While in the midst of this very dense affliction, the appreciation of the preciousness of Dharma will not arise. As long as you are willing to apply accordingly, then you will gradually recognize it. That is why the first step of applying the teaching is confession – we must gradually and gradually purify it. The more that is purified, the more realization will arise within you. By then, your advancement will speed up. I just mention it in passing. Continuing on:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 10:41; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P167 L3]

Furthermore, good qualities that have not yet developed will not develop, and those that have been developed will degenerate and then disappear.

Not only is this like the aforementioned: your good qualities that have not yet arisen will not arise; those already developed will disappear, that is how it works. If you don't rely on the teacher or have relied on him but are not practicing according to the teaching properly, under these two situations, it is impossible if you don't rely on a virtuous teacher and try to have good qualities. If you have relied on but do not abide by the teaching, it is even more so that the already developed good qualities will disappear and the yet to be developed ones will not arise. Next, it cites from a sutra.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 11:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P167 L8]

The Sutra on the Concentration Which Perceives the Buddha of the Present Face to Face states:

This is the *Sutra on the Concentration Which Perceives the Buddha of the Present Face to Face*, actually, certain references have the word “king” in the [title of the sutra], some don’t. This does not matter.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 11:34; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P167 L11]

If the students remain resentful, intractable, or hostile toward the guru, they have no way to obtain good qualities.

The sutra tells us if we are “resentful” toward the teacher, resent – you dislike him. Because you dislike him, then hostility will arise, that is how it works. And then what follows? “Intractable.” This nonvirtuous mindset lingers within. You should not have even a mild dislike, yet your mind still persists on it, ah! That is more dreadful. Earlier in the text, we were taught that your arising thoughts to serve [the teacher] generate merits; [conversely,] your arising negative thoughts will be the cause for you to be in the miserable realms for many eons. Thus, resentment should be avoided; intractability should be avoided even more. As long as you have a speck of “hostility or anger,” the effect is such. Hostility is becoming annoyed, anger is having a disturbed mind: under these conditions, to accumulate good qualities is impossible. These are stated very clearly in the sutras. Your claim to accumulate good qualities is absolutely unheard of, definitely no such thing! So what should be done? One should “develop the idea that the teacher is indistinguishable from the Buddha.” This idea needs to be developed.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 12:46; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P168 L6]

It is also the same if they do not develop the idea that the teacher is indistinguishable from the Teacher.

The aforesaid is about your resentment and hostility. Now you don't experience dislike, which is still not enough. You must be sincerely respectful, to what degree? To the point of viewing the teacher as the Buddha. If you can't view him as the Buddha, under this circumstance: good qualities that have not developed will not arise, those good qualities already developed will disappear, just like that! Not only toward our own masters, moreover:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 13:17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P168 L10]

This is explained as follows: if you do not respect persons of the third vehicle or monks who impart the teachings, or do not think of them as being the Teacher or as gurus, you have no way to obtain the good qualities that you have not yet obtained. Also, you will only waste those qualities that you have already obtained,

This is about the three vehicles [Hinayana, Mahayana, and Tantrayana]. For Mahayana of course – Lamrim is primarily guiding us to advance on the Mahayana path. As for the Hinayana, for Monks of any vehicles to impart the teaching, if you pay no respect toward him and do not view him as your teacher or Buddha, at this time you want to accumulate good qualities, it is not going to happen. The text first teaches us to refrain from reproach. That is to say,

not only should you refrain from reproaching [others], but you also must pay respect. Without respect, [good qualities] will not arise. Regardless of whether you are a Mahayana practitioner, even for the Hinayana, you must view those imparting monks as your own teachers.

[21B; 14:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P169 L3]

Now that we have this understanding, we will view teachers as the Buddha. If you are unable to do so, then it is impossible for you to receive the teaching – all that you should receive will not be available. It is not going to happen! That is to say, to not “waste those qualities that you have already obtained” is impossible! We probably would think: is that so? Maybe we are respectful most of the time, of course, some are very respectful but there are others who certainly are not! Some even commit slander – randomly claim that they also know a lot about the teaching! That is a sign of a complete lack of understanding of the Dharma, and even misunderstanding [the teaching]. What are the characteristics of Dharma? What are the characteristics of the teaching? In every aspect, these characteristics must be confirmed.

[21B; 15:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P169 L9]

The characteristics of Dharma are written on the board. Please take a look at – mental purity and serenity. Roughly speaking, these terms are interchangeable. Strictly speaking, what is mental purity? This happens during our study and reflection and the wisdom arises from it. We try to properly understand and then sincerely apply accordingly. At that time, my own perception is still there, it is not yet been removed. However, when you conform to the Dharma in this

manner, it is mental purity. What about serenity? When [afflictions] are penetrated, that is when you have attained serenity. These are the characteristics of Dharma.

[21B; 15:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P169 L13]

Now, with the recognition of what Dharma is, then Dharma can be truly understood. In the case where understanding part of the text counts as knowing it, then the tape and tape recorder know more than us. Books know more than us, as well! This we should recognize. It does not mean that I have heard a little, read some, and am able to mimic accordingly and consider this as knowing Dharma. Not at all! There are required steps to get to know the Dharma... the key point is: once you have listened with understanding and follow through to purify your contamination, thus you are able to calm your defilements and heated afflictions. These are the characteristics of Dharma.

[21B; 16:48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P170 L4]

May [I] ask, often now we heard the virtuous teacher and grumbled about him, what is the sign in your mind then? Isn't it clearly the sign of affliction? Isn't it clearly the sign of contamination? Yet [you] claim to understand Dharma. What have you understood? How absurd! Thus, nothing is more absurd than this! Once you truly have some conformity to the Dharma, you will not find any trace of these signs within. So for us to recognize Dharma by literally glancing at it, ah, I understood it! Got it! How could it be so easy? If it were truly that easy to grasp, then Buddha Dharma is worthless and it would not be recognized as precious treasure!

[21B; 17:28; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P170 L9]

Here, let me emphasize once again. Often, when we feel that we have understood a lot, this is the sign of our affliction, pride – it is all arrogance and a mind filled with heated afflictions. Comparing with others arrogantly are all causes of downfall. While one upholding ethical discipline, the feeling is I abide by the precepts and he does not – this is being far off from the Dharma! Once a little has been understood, ah! My preaching is right, and what he said is wrong – this is far off from the Dharma! Once you truly are in accordance with the teaching, purify your signs of contamination, and then you are doing it right. By the time you have this experience, you will easily understand the meaning of this statement and you will absolutely not have any disrespectful thought toward the teacher. Not to mention the teachers, even with those who have committed the most heinous crimes, you will not generate any negative thought toward them. That is when your mind aligns with the Dharma. When you see his heinous crime, you sympathize him, alas! What a pitiful person, how can I help him? That is when [you] are abiding with Dharma, and that is when you truly understood. Thus, the statement mentioned here: “to obtain good qualities that have not been obtained is impossible; for the ones already obtained to retain it is impossible,” why?

[21B; 18:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P171 L3]

for, as a result of not respecting these people, the teachings will disappear from your mind.

Dharma is incomparably precious. Whenever Buddha heard others discussing Dharma, he immediately paid full attention. There is a story in the *Agama Sutra* where

Buddha was not feeling well and was resting in bed. His disciples were discussing Dharma. Ananda and others were discussing joyous perseverance. [Upon hearing it] Buddha sat up immediately and said, “Well, Ananda! Were you just speaking about joyous perseverance?” “Yes!” Ah, Buddha was so delighted, praised immensely and venerated with the utmost respect! Why? This is the reason why Buddha achieved his Buddhahood. Even when he was ill, upon hearing the teachings, immediately and respectfully sat up in bed. He didn’t have any slight intention of: “Alas! Those youngsters discussing that, trying to show off in front of me.” Pardon, if this were the case, he absolutely would not be the Buddha.

[21B; 19:36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P171 L11]

Here is what we true practitioners of Buddha Dharma need to understand. Aren’t you here to learn from Buddha? Then look up to Buddha’s integrity? With this understanding, you will then comprehend why wherever Sung-pu-wa went, upon hearing two people discussing the teaching, he would go and listen. Afterward he said, “I received two benefits.” Isn’t Buddha a very clear [example]? Buddha already achieved his Buddhahood. Ananda, who still had not resolved [his subtler afflictions] as an entry-level arhat [stream-enterer], as soon as Ananda mentioned the two words [joyous perseverance], well! Buddha was delighted – veneration to the Dharma arose from within. So now let’s reflect, are we endowed with respect? Once you are respectful, then how can you reproach [others]? How can you resent [others]? No more of those! We have to consider it from this angle, and then gradual understanding will arise.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 21B; 20:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P172 L4]

Moreover, if you rely on nonvirtuous teachers and bad friends, your good qualities will slowly diminish and all of your faults will increase. Then everything that is unwanted will develop. Therefore, always avoid them.

The above explains the faults of not relying on a virtuous teacher. Here, it specifically tells us about the dreadfulness of relying on nonvirtuous friends and teachers. These are two sides of the same issue. Prior to the actual discussion, we have to understand a fact – that all sentient beings have this special attribute of “sentience,” which is not something that can be developed alone. It is fostered and developed among people. Thus, you are not possible to survive solely alone, impossible. However, in reality, are there such cases? Yes in the six realms of the cyclic existence! The beings in the unrelenting hell are alone; what else? Beings in the formless realm are alone. Both beings are unable to apply the teaching. They just have to endure the karmic effect, just like that. Other than these two, beings must survive among other beings. At that juncture, if you don’t rely on a virtuous teacher, you must rely on a non-virtuous teacher. We have to be clear on this concept. So before we go over the faults of relying on non-virtuous teachers, we have to realize it is not possible to be neutral, absolute nothing in between! If the plan is to study Buddha Dharma, you have to understand this concept. It is very important, very crucial!

[21B; 22:20; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P173 L2]

Regarding the characteristics of nonvirtuous teachers, it will be discussed later. However, here we need to

understand, if you don't rely on virtuous teacher and rely on non-virtuous teachers and bad friends, what will happen? Your good qualities will slowly diminish, and all faults will gradually increase. All the arising conditions are unfavorable to you, and all flaws arise from here. Thus, under any circumstances, one must stay away [from nonvirtuous beings]. So here, the text specifically tells us: under all conditions, you must rely on a virtuous teacher. In any situation, you must avoid non-virtuous teachers. Why? Because when you rely on virtuous teacher all good qualities will increase; whereas lean toward the non-virtuous teacher, all faults will increase. Now let's take a recess.

[21B; 23:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P173 L8]

Let us take a look at the nonvirtuous teacher now. First, the sutras explained the concept to us already: between relying on a virtuous or nonvirtuous teachers, let me specifically remind everyone here, if you don't rely on virtuous teachers, then you are relying on non-virtuous teachers. There is no gray area – not to advance is to fall back, no improvement is falling behind. Even if you strive to improve, it might not happen. This is what we should understand. There is no alternative here. It is not by standing here and asking, do you approve or disapprove? Nobody raised his hand. Even those who approved didn't raise their hands and the same goes for those who disapprove. In this case, it is possible to be neutral. However, there is no gray area in [our] case here, you can only take one side. For this concept, you may not understand it, for now, continue with earnest study, by the time you have proper recognition of the characteristics of Dharma, this concept will become very clear to you. When I refer to the clarity of the Dharma characteristics, it doesn't mean your capability to clearly distinguish literally. To be

clear about the Dharma characteristics, you must see the mental activity clearly, well, this is how mental momentum goes. By then, when you see others, you probably can more or less understand [where they come from]. Then you will know clearly that the in-between area is absolutely not an option.

[21B; 24:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P174 L3]

Let me share with you one of my painful experiences. About 20 years ago, not too long after I was ordained, my stomach had always been weak, particular during that time. When I arrived [at the monastery], one of the Dharma masters was very nice and sympathized with my condition. Seeing me, he said, “Alas, so and so...” Because he may have more or less heard about how I became a monk, I truly appreciated his kindness. He came to talk to me and gave me some clothes, then said: “So and so! Since you are fatigued, please do take good care! Be careful!” At that time, I thought this Dharma master was so nice, how compassionate! Then he started telling me about eating, be careful with this and that. Back then I really appreciated him. However, later I realized, sigh, nonvirtuous teacher! What did I further recognize? The dreadful part of this non-virtue – normally when we are in the midst of non-virtue, we are not aware of it. He had a kind intent, pretty good intention. At that time, I constantly felt, alas, [what he said] was true! Later, I gradually understood – many people spend their entire lives moaning and groaning for no reason, and some even suffer from the notion of being tormented by illness.

[21B; 26:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P174 L13]

I always thought I was a pretty good [practitioner], yet this disturbed my life. I might as well briefly share this story with everyone as a point of reference, and hopefully, you will not make the same mistake. On the positive side, I began by staying in the Fu-yan Abode. Later, because they were establishing a school, so I moved to Tong-jing Bodhi Abode (同淨蘭若). At that time, [I was] honored to be escorted there in person by a Dharma master. So this Dharma master told Venerable Ren, “Venerable! This person is pretty good, other than he is somewhat frail.” It was very kind of Venerable Ren to think much of me. So I stayed there for the first night. In the morning at breakfast, Venerable Ren said, “It seems your health does not look very good, you have to take care!” I replied: “Venerable! Please do not treat me like a patient, I am not willing to be treated like that!” Venerable Ren really took this in. Later, [I found out] the reason that I was able to follow him for years has always been based on this [incident]. I am much indebted to his kindness. There were two major reasons for this. One of them I have told you before, and the other one is this reply of mine. Deep down inside, I truly felt that I should not treat myself as a patient and I never had. Despite this, there are various minor conditions and I never like to take medication! What for? Let it be, for taking medication is troublesome – this was [my] attitude. Just perk up!

[21B; 28:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P175 L10]

However, due to my weak stomach, later when I came to the United States after stomach surgery, ever since then the discomfort remained. I still remember now, what the previous seemingly kind Dharma master had told me. He wasn't very healthy either, many people have stomach discomfort, and he advised to provide this and that solution!

I was affected by this, firmly believed that he also read many medical texts. Now, I recognized this as what? Wrong view. These confused views of sentient beings are very difficult to figure out!

[21B; 28.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P175 L15]

At that time, with this weak stomach, thus [I] had to see a doctor. After several visits, the problem was gone. However, I was impacted by earlier influence, I knew that Chinese herbal medicine cured the basic cause, whereas western medicine treats the apparent symptom. Often, when western medicine identified the illness, it usually was too late for treatment. I always thought that the doctor didn't identify it and the root cause was still there, so I made my own surefire decision. The doctor said, "You don't need to take this medicine." Since I didn't feel right and the problem had been there for so long, I took the initiative to buy the medicine and took it. Altogether, I took it for over a year. Now, with my weak stomach, when I reflect on it, this [wrong view] definitely had a lot to do with it! Often, [we] think that being ill is where the trouble begins. Later... of course, this is from the worldly aspect, and the same applies to Buddha Dharma. We often feel that this person is comforting you, helping you, and thus the force to motivate you to advance with joyous perseverance fades away!

[22A; 00:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P179 L1]

Some people will remove the firewood from under the cauldron, which is to remove the negative causes from you. The other [nonvirtuous] kind of person will remove positive causes from you. You hear their words and you feel that it makes a lot of sense. Originally, you planned to strive in the study, and he tells you: "So and so, your health is not so

good, rest well and get more nutrition.” So you [think]: “Right! Sleep in for a little bit longer in the morning.” So then, at the point where you were supposed to make effort, that driving force, unbeknownst to you, has diminished. This is truly the dreadful part. At that time, what do you need? You need to rely on discerning wisdom. So the text told us the three suitable qualifications [of student]. Being nonpartisan alone is not sufficient, and intelligence is also required. Then, you will have the ability to distinguish if his view is correct or seemingly correct – something that resembles the right expression. See below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P90; 22A; 01:05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P179 L8]

The *Mindfulness of the Excellent Teaching* states:

The basis of all attachment, hostility, and ignorance is bad friends; they are like a poisonous tree trunk.

The basis of all virtues is the virtuous teacher. The basis of all non-virtues is nonvirtuous companions. These nonvirtuous companions are often people around you. They are in the midst of ignorance, yet are giving you advice. It is like a poisonous tree. What is a poisonous tree like? It is poisonous from the root up throughout the entire tree. When the wind blows, the wind that passes through this tree will poison you. You totally cannot sense it. Sigh, when the wind blows, the feeling of coolness will arise. When it is sunny and you sit under the tree enjoying the shade – you have been poisoned. This nonvirtuous companion is so dreadful! Ah, this is so horrible!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 01:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P180 L6]

The *Great Final Nirvana Sutra* also says that

The author used various sutras to teach and advise us.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 01:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P180 L8]

bodhisattvas do not fear mad elephants and the like in the same way that they fear bad friends. The former merely destroy the body, whereas the latter destroy both virtue and a pure mind.

This is the way we should treat nonvirtuous friends, just like how Bodhisattvas guard against nonvirtuous friends. How do they guard against them? Their fear of nonvirtuous friends is extreme. Mad elephants in India are the most feared [creature]. A tamed elephant usually will not get mad, but once it gets a little intoxicated, then it will cause a mess. With wild elephants, while they roam untamed in the forest, when a herd of elephants passes by, even lions or tigers will make way for them. So you can imagine how fierce elephants can be. So when a mad elephant comes, ah! There is absolutely nothing you can do. It can be described as extremely frightening. But, well! The fear Bodhisattvas have toward nonvirtuous friends is far beyond the fear of a mad elephant. Why? The most a mad elephant can destroy is this life, whereas nonvirtuous friends not only destroy your virtuous roots, but they also destroy your life. With regard to your “pure mind” – in other words, your virtuous roots will be uprooted, such dreadfulness! A mad elephant can end your life, that’s all. But nonvirtuous friends will definitely send you to hell, so terrifying! If you were to die, at most you would experience a few hours of pain, whereas downfall to hell lasts for immeasurable eons. Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 03:23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P181 L4]

Moreover, it states that mad elephants and bad friends respectively destroy the body of flesh and the body of the teachings.

This we can distinguish clearly.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 03:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P181 L6]

Even more, the former cannot propel you into miserable realms, whereas the latter definitely can.

A mad elephant or harm from anything else cannot propel you into the miserable realms. But bad friends will definitely send you to miserable realms.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 03:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P181 L9]

Also, the *Chapter of the Truth Speaker* states:

There are those whose minds are seized by bad friends, as if by poisonous snakes,

But have forsaken the poison's antidote, the teacher.

Alas, even if they listen to the precious and sublime teaching,

They will fall into the great abyss of unrestraint.

If you take a nonvirtuous friend as someone to rely on, he is like a poisonous snake. And yet you hang on to it and consider him as the reliance. It is like this nonvirtuous friend has captured your mind and, during that time, you are definitely far away from the virtuous teacher. What is a

virtuous teacher like? You are rejecting their remedy to cure the three mental poisons from beginningless time. Under this circumstance, even if you have heard the precious teaching, it is of no use! Although you hear it or let's not refer to hearing – even if you are able to talk about it eloquently, it is useless. The last line, “they will fall into the great abyss of unrestraint.” The great abyss refers to the miserable realms. If [you] slack then it is the opposite of joyous perseverance. Buddha Dharma is meant for [our] proper practice, now, hearing the teachings is not helping you, for you did not abide by it! Not only did [you] not abide by it - the nonvirtuous people in the mundane world may not fall into unrelenting hell, not necessarily end up in the hell – whereas those who intend to study Buddha Dharma are unable to rely on a virtuous teacher yet took the wrong path, will certainly downfall. Among all these, the most horrible factor is the ones who guided you – the nonvirtuous friend – this is what we have to recognize.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 05:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P182 L7]

Also, the *Verses about Friends* says:

The wise should not befriend

Those who are without faith or who are stingy,

Those who lie, or who speak divisively;

They should not accompany sinful persons.

This points out the characteristics of nonvirtuous companions. This statement already covers all: “without faith,” lacking faith. As for this faith, everyone should pay attention: it is not like claiming that I have faith in Buddha. No, it is not just “this one statement,” merely stating so does not count. The specific characteristic of faith is “faith from a purified mind” (淨心為性). Then how can we distinguish the

nature of the purified mind? Hence, wisdom definitely is required. The characteristic of faith is that it helps you to eliminate affliction – to purify affliction. Once you have the proper understanding, when others speak, you are able to recognize [their level of purification]. Often we engage in gossip, once started, you will know: “alas, pardon, since he is involved in this contention and his mind is not pure - in the midst of afflictive contamination” [you] should immediately stay away. Thus, for a true practitioner, he will definitely [not befriend sinful persons].

[22A; 06:19; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P183 L1]

Is it so that true practitioners never discuss right from wrong? They do! However, under what circumstance? The practitioner is distinctly aware of how to remove nonvirtues and adopt virtues. That is right! Yet he is absolutely not applying the worldly gossiping approach, this we have to clearly recognize. The practitioner should definitely not be confused, for meditating on the teaching definitely requires great wisdom. The practitioner should clearly identify any given characteristic – distinguish right from wrong! But how does the practitioner differentiate? The practitioner should know how to transform contamination into purification. Well, this is nonvirtuous, how do you eliminate it? How to prevent yourself from being contaminated and purify? And then, this is followed by how to help others [to purify]. Under a given situation, if others have this shortcoming, how do you help [them]? Of course, you have to know the root cause of [their] problem, and [they] must also be aware of it. However, this kind of awareness is totally different from our ordinary afflictive signs. The latter awareness of yours [which is endowed with wisdom] will not influence you [with wrong view], thus you are able to distinguish others right from wrong clearly. The other type is you are completely

entangled in the situation, you don't even know if you are contaminated and, in fact, [you are] totally in pitch darkness. So the former [relying on a virtuous teacher] is proper discernment, we must have this requirement. The latter [nonvirtuous friends] is erroneous discernment and this is what we need to do away with. Hence, the reason that we are able to do away with erroneous discernment is totally relying on [our] proper discernment.

[22A; 07:41; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P183 L11]

When we first begin our proper discernment, it should accord with study and reflection. Once you have attained the nonconceptual, sublime wisdom [v.3 p.344], that not-to-be-influenced state conforms to the meditation practice. However, this conformity of meditation practice is not thinking of nothing, [thinking of nothing] is also wrong. So with the signs of meditative equipoise [the mind state during meditation] or post-equipoise [the mind state after the meditation session], we will gradually, gradually understand them. Now, we should never think: "Ah! One should not distinguish it erroneously." Actually, [we] are submerged in great ignorance and totally muddled, not able to tell right from wrong and consider this as applying the teaching. If applying the teaching is so then it is way too easy! All you have to do is lie there and sleep, wouldn't that be meditating on the teaching? You are there in the midst of nonconceptual distinguishing! In the sutras, they also refer to those people that are like snails or clams – they are in the state of nonconceptuality. So does that mean [snail or clam] has achieved the nonconceptual, sublime wisdom? They can't even differentiate right from wrong, this we have to clearly recognize. [I] just bring it up in passing. Hence, this is

the apparent characteristic that you have to be very clear, upholding this understanding is good!

[22A; 08:39; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P184 L4]

Moreover, the next are stingy, lie, and speak divisively, etc. these are even worse and coarser; this is easy for us to understand. As people are inclined to senseless and divisive speech, “the wise” – those with true wisdom – should definitely not befriend or follow those people [who speak divisively and lie], for they are nonvirtuous friends. So nonvirtuous friends are definitely not those who fight with you today, shout at or argue with you, not like that. We should understand this definition in Buddha Dharma.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 09:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P184 L8]

**Even those who do not sin
Create the doubt that they might be doing so
If they rely on those who do sin,
Thereby increasing that which is unpleasant.**

If you do not engage [in sin], yet once you befriend those people, very sorry, sigh! Others will always feel that you ... actually, you will definitely be involved [in their deeds]. Humans are like this, just like this! For instance, we can use anyone as an example, taking myself for instance: I’ve been to many places. Of course, I am older now and know more people. In my earlier days, wherever I went, people often asked: “So and so, where are you from?” So I would tell them where I came from and which teacher I relied on. Oh! When they heard that, “Well, good, good, welcome, welcome!” Why is that? Right away I benefited – not because of myself, but from the reputation of my virtuous

teacher. Conversely, say you come from a certain place [that is not as excellent]. When people hear that, wow, even though he might respond fine, fine, fine, in his mind he is seeking a way to prevent you [from further interface]. I believe we all have this kind of experience! Just like that. What is actually happening? The apparent response reflects what is within – the negative reputation will also multiply.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 10:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P185 L3]

**The person who relies on the unreliable
Will have faults as a result,
Just as unsmeared arrows are tainted
When arrows smeared with poison are placed in the
same quiver.**

Actually, once you are close to him, not only will your reputation be ruined – what will happen in reality? Just like this! As soon as you rely on him, very sorry, all his flaws will taint you. Just like putting the poison-covered arrows in your quiver, the arrows smeared with poison – anything they touch will be contaminated by poison! Any part that touches it will be poisoned! Even though you are not poisoned, as soon as you come into contact with it, you are doomed! Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 10:33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P185 L8]

By relying on the nonvirtuous teachers, your previously existent wrongdoing—deeds wrong by nature and deeds wrong by prohibition—does not diminish, and new wrongdoing increases.

This is the characteristic of a nonvirtuous teacher. Once you rely on him, the wrongdoings – the deeds wrong by nature and deeds wrong by prohibition, all the nonvirtuous causes – once they arise, you cannot diminish them. As a Buddha Dharma practitioner, what [wrongdoings] we had before, [we] need to diminish them. Now you are close to someone and cannot diminish [the wrongdoings]. Not only are you unable to diminish them, but also whatever wrongdoing you did not have, he will make you increase. We should apply the teaching to remove them and do the exact opposite! So, in order to apply the teaching, [we] need to rely on virtuous teachers and avoid nonvirtuous ones.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 11:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P185 L13]

Geshe Drom-don-ba said:

The worst person, though keeping good company, does not become better than middling. The best, when keeping company with the worst, readily becomes part of the worst.

So, this great teacher told us that even the worst person in a good environment would barely manage to become a middling person, thus, to advance is not an easy task! However, for the best to keep company with the worst, then “readily without much effort,” without any effort, you become like the worst. This is absolutely true. Thus, learning the teaching is like riding a boat against the current. Even if you strive hard, you may not necessarily make it! This is why, during Buddha’s time, this was emphasized in every aspect! Now, we should be attentive: applying Buddha Dharma should never succumb to the tendency to be accommodating. This sensibility* is the greatest contamination in itself. In the Buddhism communities, a true

villain may not be there, but there is a lack of self-awareness of being in the midst of ignorance and being harmed by this [ignorance]. Thus, we are dragged down by this burden of sensibility; this is a very pitiful matter.

*[*Sensibility: refers to our worldly attitude of overly accommodating to please others.]*

[22A; 12:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P186 L9]

Though today we are in a degenerate time, to be ordained in this environment is not easy, not easy at all! For those of you sitting here, all of you have a bright future. You are endowed with great qualifications. Today, as a monastic, you must continue to cultivate the virtuous roots from previous lives. And please do remember! The most important thing to realize is to rely on virtuous teachers – this is very important, very crucial! Otherwise, the rarely accumulated virtuous roots from previous lives may be unknowingly ruined and cause [you] to fall to the miserable realms. This is not worthwhile, too worthless!

[22A; 12:54; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P186 L14]

So, the preceding section already identified key points one by one, every characteristic for practice is clearly and explicitly explained to us. So in order for us to strengthen this concept, let's please take a look at the outline.

[22A; 13:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P187 L2]

The outline is in the very beginning, [please refer to v.1 the last line of page 34, the first page of chapter 4, and page 356] “How to lead students with the actual instructions.” This is the actual session of studying Buddha Dharma. This is

when we have obtained all the preceding basic qualifications and begin to actually apply Buddha Dharma. There are two parts: “How to rely on the teacher, the root of the path.” Relying on the virtuous teacher is in turn subdivided into six parts. The first defines the characteristics of the teacher to be relied upon; the second defines the characteristics of being a student who relies upon the teacher. So what are the qualifications of a virtuous teacher? And for those relying on him, what conditions are required? For each point, [we] must carefully examine ourselves. And then, with all the qualifications, how do we rely on him? What should we do to rely on him? Later, it specifies the benefits of reliance and the great disadvantage of not relying. If you recognize each step, understand it, and are able to apply them accordingly, then the study of Buddha Dharma is half-way done! “To go 100 miles, you must travel 90 miles to be halfway finished.” Half way done, you have traveled ninety miles already, how true this is.

[22A; 14:44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P187 L11]

In the future, you should strive on this and experience it for yourself. Once you sincerely relied on such a virtuous teacher, applying the teaching will not be a hard task. I am saying this in advance, for now, we all should gradually work on this. If you can recognize it in this life and practice accordingly, I believe by then, all of you deserve to be greeted with congratulations, rejoice! Lastly,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 15:17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P188 L1]

f. A summary of the meaning of the previous five parts

Now let's go back to the text. What is the "summary of the meaning"? It means that all the preceding sections have been discussed and there is still some conclusion, and for any parts that were missing or not clear, they will be covered here. Because this study is about Buddha Dharma, this summary is very important, too important! So several major points were first delineated and clearly explained. Now, let's take a look.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 15:50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P188 L6]

Thus, you must also understand as explained above the instruction that is renowned as "guru yoga."

Why is it universally, collectively without exception that [Buddha Dharma] specifically emphasizes praising, complimenting, and valuing the concept of relying on the virtuous teacher? "The instruction that is renowned as 'guru yoga.'" Instructions, in other words, are the important outline or key points of our learning of Buddha Dharma. What does this key point represent? Guru yoga. So, to rely on a virtuous teacher, how do we conform to the reliance of the virtuous teacher? "Yoga" means to "do it right." It does not mean that I understand one concept – then can [I] put it into practice? After practice, has it been done correctly? After doing it right, does it conform to what he taught? This is the first key point to our study of Buddha Dharma – once you apply it properly, then the rest of the problem will be solved - it can be put this way. Just as what was said earlier, it has already been explained to us clearly. And below, there are several reminders. Even if you understood the concept and even if you have begun to practice, the practice must be sincere and not careless. So, next:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 17:08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P189 L1]

Yet, you will get nowhere by training in an object of meditation for just a single session.

Suppose you have been training, but just once or twice is of no use! The “object of meditation” is the object for our practice. There is always some object that occupies our mind – if you recite Amitabha Buddha then Amitabha Buddha is the object. Now, what is our mental object? It is the signs of greed, anger, and ignorance. These occupy our minds. Because there is a lack of awareness, so it is ignorance! That is called great ignorance, the sign of foolishness, just like that. When you truly engage in it, you will see it clearly – delicious food in front of you, staring with wide-open eyes. However, the eyes of your mind are wider than your actual eyes – that is when this object occupies our minds. Conversely, when facing a rival, even though you are wearing a smile, your eyes will also stare wide. At that time, this object [of the enemy] occupies your mind.

[22A; 18:02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P189 L9]

So what do we focus on now? [We] focus on the “teaching” of how to rely on a virtuous teacher. So, this is the time for our practice, and the sequential steps are as explained earlier. The teaching did not say to practice once or twice. Once or twice is not enough. Not to mention our attitude of: “Well, got it, got it. I heard and understood it!” and then close the book – this learning attitude is not sufficient. However, for now, our first priority is to understand and recognize [our object of meditation] – this is our focus for now. Sure! The ones are able to apply the teaching now do so right away. Others [short of this

capability] first understand the entire framework of the Lamrim steps and outline, and then gradually advance. This is the proper approach; recognize it in this manner. Next, it encourages us:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P91; 22A; 18:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P190 L1]

When you practice a teaching from the heart, you must rely for a long time on an excellent teacher who guides you accurately.

Now, we should ask ourselves, am I like that? Like what? “You practice a teaching from the heart.” Are you serious about taking the path of a practitioner? Nowadays, many people say I really want to practice, want to chant Buddha’s name. Regardless of the path you want to take, examine whether you sincerely aspire to do this from the depths of your heart. If this is the aspiration, then practice “for a long time.” For a long time means to “rely” continuously. Rely on what? Rely on the virtuous teacher. This laudable virtuous teacher definitely can guide you flawlessly. This is absolutely required, absolutely necessary.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22A; 19:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P190 L7]

Moreover, it is as Chay-ga-wa said, “When relying on the guru, there is the chance that you might give up your guru.”

How do [you] rely? This teacher tells us very clearly: when you rely upon the guru, be cautious and alert, be afraid to commit any slight wrongdoing, this is required. Up to this point, I also believe that, among the students here,

you all can be my teacher in every aspect. Admittedly, it is the case with what was just discussed and many other aspects, too. One day, I was in the room, I heard the telephone ring and picked it up to discover that it was not for me but for someone else. Right away one student monk asked: “Well, who is it for?” He was there studying on his own, after hearing it ... Ah! I felt, [he is] truly my virtuous teacher. Even though for myself, I truthfully cannot say I have achieved much. Also, in this place I am only like a tape recorder mimicking what my teachers have told me, replaying it to you again. But in this student monk’s mind, he took it very seriously. Ah, I believe [he] is my virtuous teacher! What does this explain? It explains that the sign of reliance is mindfulness [toward the teacher] in all aspects. I read about ancient great teachers, they were truly endowed the so-called attitude of a dutiful child. He constantly thinks about the virtuous teacher and how to serve the teacher and is worried to make any speck of mistake.

[22A; 20:59; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P191 L4]

Speaking of this, for example, there was someone who wanted to leave. I didn’t ask him to stay. When he first came, I had a good impression of him; I feel ... No matter whom, as long as he enters the monastery, I always have immeasurable praise. The second morning after he came, there happened to be a lay practitioner who came and offered something like pistachios, I believe. So I left them in my room. The next morning, I took them out and told him: “So and so, please take this to offer to Buddha, just do that and later take it to the dining hall.” He took it and randomly left it on the side without doing anything to it. I didn’t say anything, and half a day passed, that was what happened. Finally, I saw that it was offered, so I told him: “After this is offered, you can take it down.” He replied that the offer was

made in the afternoon, so it should be left until the next day. Therefore from the time it was handed to him until the time it got to the dining hall, it was three days. When I saw this, I felt it was very pitiful, very pitiful! At that time, I thought: alas, I don't know how to help him, yet I have to try my best.

[22A; 22:13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P191 L13]

The reason I share these two stories is that, to me, both of them – from the worldly aspect, maybe you will prefer one over the other. However, at that time I had already started to remind myself constantly – well, well, both are my virtuous teachers. I should not learn from that person [who left] and learn from this student monk [who helped to notify an incoming call]. I just mention it here in passing. Therefore, those who truly rely on virtuous teachers are actually endowed with the causes for achievement; this is what we should learn. Below it tells us,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22A; 22:49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P192 L2]

So, if you rely without knowing how, you will not profit, but lose.

This is if we do not know how to rely, not only will we not be benefited, but we will be harmed. This is what we need to be specifically cautious of! This is something that has to be guarded against. So, many people come and say: “Well! I am going to study in the Buddhist academy here.” If you are after a diploma, please refrain from coming. With the attitude of just wanting to drift along, that is even not acceptable! This concept must be clear from the very beginning. So for those of you coming here – those sitting

here – I have told most of you, come and give it a try! Give it a try for one to three months. If you feel that it is not for you, then gradually prepare to leave, that is fine. The reason being: if you don't take it in the right way, not only there is no benefit, but also you will be harmed. This should be avoided!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22A; 23:45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P192 L10]

Therefore, these topics concerning reliance on the teacher are clearly the foundation of our deepest aspiration, which is more important than anything else.

This is more important than the later teachings, for this is the fundamental. Once you have the foundation, then the upper levels can be established slowly. On the contrary, without your foundation, you rush to build the third floor then it will collapse. What good is that? So here, Lama Tsong-kha-pa specifically tells us,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22A; 24:12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P193 L1]

Consequently, I have taken citations from uncorrupted scriptures and their commentaries, which are easy to understand as well as inspiring, and I have given a general overview that is adorned with the sayings of excellent persons who are engaged in the meaning of the scriptures. Understand this in detail from other sources.

Therefore, now Lama Tsong-kha-pa says that he sees this as the root of our ultimate happiness. Now we need to obtain the true benefit, and the ultimate one is to achieve

Buddhahood! Become a Buddha! In order to have this achievement, what is the root cause? That is right here – rely on a virtuous teacher. Thus, he specifically quotes from the sutras, commentaries, and words of great teachers. And what are those scriptures? “Uncorrupted scriptures.” This actually includes two qualifications. The first one, this scripture must completely align to what we are discussing. What does this mean? For instance, if it is for the Mahayana teachings then it should conform to Mahayana. If the study is for profound-view teachings, then one must conform to that. Thus, the scriptures are of course flawless, but there is the “vessel^{*}” that we must conform to also. This vessel is not very easy. What Buddha taught is absolutely accurate. However, to conform to the vessel requires certain qualifications. Now that Lama Tsong-kha-pa has left us a few hundred years ago, we should carefully examine ourselves to become concordant with him. Then [we] are doing it right!

*[*Vessel: refers to our qualification as a suitable disciple to receive the teachings.]*

[22A; 25:56; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P193 L11]

After quoting from the scripture, what else? They are “easy to understand as well as inspiring,” these two expressions. Even though the author cited the scriptures here, if there are no clear explanations, we will not understand them. When I discuss the text with you all, I also abide by this principle. That is why there may be many seemingly popular expressions, why? For popular examples enable our easier understanding. It is also easy for us to relate immediately, this is the proper approach. Relate to what? “Inspiring” – to be inspired, oh, transformed! Otherwise, our ignorance from beginningless is like rawhide,

unbendable. What is the use of all this talk? What is the use of hearing the teachings at length? So what is the reason here? Lama Tsong-kha-pa made a great effort, and now we are also learning sincerely. These explanations are actually “engaged in the meaning of the scriptures.” To be inspired does not necessarily make us accord with the scriptures. Extravagant embellishments can be incorrect, which is harmful! So it has to perfectly match with the intent in the scripture, through a proper explanation that delivers profound scriptural meaning for us to understand accordingly.

[22A; 27:09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P194 L6]

Lama Tsong-kha-pa also said “sayings of excellent persons.” That is quotations from teachers of the lineage, words of the past masters. This is the true privilege of coming here [to the monastery], truly a privilege! However, what is the teaching here? “General overview” – this is the outline; it is only a brief overview. So the principles are delineated here, the principles are all included. What remains now is how we should practice. If gaining more understanding is [our] aspiration, “understand this in detail from other sources.” We do our own research. Next is another urging. This advice accurately depicts our current state of mind.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22A; 27:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P194 L11]

Our afflictions are extremely coarse. Some listen to the teachings given by many teachers. They do not know how to rely on the guru, and, even if they know how, they do not do it. Therefore, they will incur immeasurable misdeeds that are related to their

improper reliance on the guru. Moreover, they will find it difficult to develop an awareness of practices such as confession of former wrongdoing and restraint from future wrongdoing.

This is the actual situation, so what are we supposed to do now? Alas! How terrible, the affliction is very coarse and weighty! “Coarse” refers to our apparent attitude, and “weighty” refers to the quantity. Quality and quantity are coarse and weighty, just like that. This is when the total reliance on the purification by virtuous teachers is required. Yet we just cannot understand – we do not know how to rely on a teacher, which is the first hurdle. Upon understanding, “even if they know how, they do not do it.” Sigh! Knowing it but unable to follow it. Under this circumstance, “therefore, they will incur immeasurable misdeeds that are related to their improper reliance on the guru.” Essentially, upon reliance on a virtuous teacher, affliction will be diminished and merits will increase. Due to our inability to abide accordingly, many wrongdoings increase instead. So what should be done with wrongdoing? Immediately confess! What will the effect be? “They will find it difficult to develop an awareness of practices such as confession of former wrongdoing and restraint from future wrongdoing.” So confession is required, confess the past wrongdoings that [you] engaged in, and refrain from doing it again. This is at the time of sincere confession; it has to be done in this manner!

[22B; 00:04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P197 L1]

Lama Tsong-kha-pa specifically points out here, truly explains this with earnest care. I often overlook ... this is easily overlooked. Well, examine it closely, and take a close look at [this teaching about our latent propensities]! So...

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22B; 00:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P197 L3]

Thus, after you have understood the benefits and faults as previously explained, reflect on them repeatedly.

So we should understand the concepts stated earlier – don't overlook it, the reasoning actually has a direct impact on us, a very direct impact. Abide by it and it will benefit you in a great way. Conversely, disaccord with it the consequence is grief. So why is that we understood yet are unable to apply it? That is due to our habits from beginningless time; this karmic force is weighty. So, later, the author will tell us, what is the true importance for us? It is to "reflect on them repeatedly." The "reflection" is in our karmic stream. Due to our weighty karmic propensity from beginningless time, although we listen with great joy, afterward, the latent propensity is back! Then, what is your only remedy? It is, upon hearing, to reflect on it immediately and analyze with deeper understanding. That is when the true effect will arise.

[22B; 01:16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P198 L3]

Therefore, much earlier I mentioned that now we often feel that we recognize the perception clearly, but just can't make it happen. Why? This has been discussed with you before. I believe that some of you here must have the same experience. What is the cause? It is right here [to properly know the advantages and disadvantages]. What is the remedy? To "reflect on them repeatedly." First, if this understanding is lacking, there is no doubt that nothing can be done. Whereas if you understood it yet can't apply it, that is due to your inability to practice and uphold it properly.

[22B; 01:52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P198 L7]

Thus, here, the practice means reflecting, repeatedly contemplating. Reflect on your practice, what kind of laudable benefits will it have? What kind of disadvantages will come from not practicing? Well, with these, you will think: alas, just strive for it! Then for the next step, you will feel, how can it be done? And you engage in it, later ... after knowing how then you can accomplish it! So what we have said before: we know it yet can't put it into practice. Actually, we have not accurately understood it according to the teachings. At the present time, we often say, ah! You don't need erroneous discretion so just don't make differentiations! It seems like a simple statement to say, will the fulfillment be achieved in the end? Very sorry! If [the knowledge] were given to 100 people, there would be 100 of them who fail. This is a true statement. Why? It is because of the systematic order – you totally...need to grasp the primary principle. Just like when we look at a rocket in orbit. Wow, talking about rockets, they are well known to everyone! Although we know it, it is up there in the sky whereas I am on the earth. We are over tens of thousands of miles apart, totally unrelated. Here now, the text guides us on every step so we can actually advance accordingly!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22B; 03:03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P199 L1]

Those whose practice of relying on the teacher was improper in previous lives should achieve an attitude of confession and restraint from the depths of their hearts. Exert yourself in the practice of those teachings for which you are suited as a recipient, and repeatedly contemplate the complete qualifications of your teacher.

Make many aspirational prayers and accumulate the collections of merit and sublime wisdom as causes for having such a teacher to look after you until you attain enlightenment.

It says that from beginningless time, we did not practice properly. Now, with recognition of the flaws, the first thing is to repent what was already done in the past. And then, absolutely refrain from doing it again – we must restrain ourselves in the future. Once improper deeds are eliminated, strive to apply the teaching to become a suitable Dharma vessel, and then you can receive Buddha Dharma. Upon receiving Buddha Dharma and practicing accordingly, achievement follows – all of this relies on a virtuous teacher. So now, what to do about our sincere application? This is one aspect. Next, “repeatedly contemplate the complete qualifications of your teacher.” Well! Just like that. Unfortunately, as of now, we don’t do it this way, why? It is very simple – the dependent arising of the karmic effect and layers of obstacles! With this understanding, so long as you are willing to work on it, then the obscurations will be eliminated and the merits can be accumulated. As long as you plant the cause, then the effect will arise in the future.

[22B; 04:30; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P199 L11]

Now you want to clear away obscurations and accumulate merits, why? The purpose is this [to attain enlightenment]. So the text says, “make many aspirational prayers and accumulate the collections of merit and sublime wisdom.” Ah! I want to attain enlightenment. To attain enlightenment, this is the required route. This is our aspiration now. Your doing so will plant the correct cause. Due to this correct cause, you will receive the effect in the

future. So before your attainment of enlightenment, constantly strive at it. To strive on this cause, in the future, the corresponding effect will automatically arise. So what we should truly engage in is this. By planting this cause, naturally, in the future, Manjusri Bodhisattva will also come to the east side of the city and say [like the story of Youthful Sudhana in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*]: “So and so! Now you are seeking and this is how you should go about it!” All 53 virtuous teachers* are waiting there. They have waited for immeasurable eons, but we are just not ready. These statements I believe we all can understand. All Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are without exception, they want to help us – they have waited for us for eons and eons, yet we just don’t have the qualifications and have not become suitable Dharma vessels. It’s not hard to attain enlightenment in one lifetime! Where is the key? It is right in here.

*[*Youthful Sudhana in Array of Stalks Sutra visited 53 teachers for the sake of achieving ultimate enlightenment.]*

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P92; 22B; 05:49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P200 L7]

Once you have done this, you will quickly become like the conquerors’ child Sadaprarudita, who had perfect courage, and the Youthful Sudhana, who knew no limit in his search for teachers.

If we can do this, well, it won’t take long [for our enlightenment]! Why? Because obscurations will be cleared and collections will be accumulated! With this cause of yours, of course, the effect will arise immediately, just that simple! So we might think, alas! Achieving Buddhahood is so far away. Actually, it is not so! Youthful Sudhana achieved it in one lifetime. As long as you do it right at the

causal stage, it will be right! So, regarding these two, one is Sadapraudita Bodhisattva in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*; the other is Youthful Sudhana in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*. I will not elaborate on their stories here. Sadapraudita is a Bodhisattva described in the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. Why is he called Sadapraudita [constant-tearing]? For the sake of seeking a virtuous teacher, he cried. He even was going to tear his heart out and give it to others in his pursuit of a virtuous teacher, such hardship! We are more familiar with Youthful Sudhana. If you can do the same [as what they did], the attainment is achievable soon.

[22B; 06:57; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P201 L1]

These are the aspects of a virtuous teacher. Now that we know this, well! So it turns out that practicing Buddha Dharma starts from here, we should feel fortunate! Actually, the difficulty is that you are not able to find this path. Now that you have found it, it becomes easier to traverse. In the future, with your proper understanding – based on my present understanding, not taking the path is a very difficult and painful matter. Taking the path is comparatively less effort! We may consider, if practicing the teaching is so difficult, how can you say that not taking it is hard and taking it is comparatively easier? Well, this concept is actually very easy! We all can experience it, just like that. Often, when we apply the teaching, due to our obscurations from beginningless time, hence many conditions and obstacles have not been cleared for sincere practice. The obstacles are weighty, so of course, you are unable to apply the teaching. You have not accumulated enough collections and do not know the path, so it is difficult. Once you have true understanding, why is it easy? [Obstacles are] eliminated, naturally, it becomes easy!

[22B; 08:06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P201 L9]

Take us for example. There are many worldly good things and who does not want them? Everyone yearns for them. If one was stopped to do so, of course, the willingness is not there. If there was a good food in front of you and you were told to sit there and eat it very slowly, you cannot endure it! Why is it that there is good food and you are not allowed to take it? In fact, to tell us to just sit there [in front of the food], we can't. It is easier to stand up and walk around. I believe we all have this experience, right? Why? That is because, in your mind, you properly understand the benefits of it, and then generate the motivation within. By that time, engaging in it becomes very easy. Buddha Dharma is the same. Now with the contamination in our mind, once you have actually recognized it, you will know that for all of the actual benefits we are seeking, what do they rely on? Rely on Dharma wealth - the wealth of Buddha Dharma. By then, stopping you from doing it is impossible. When asking you to cultivate, it becomes easy. I believe we all can recognize this.

[22B; 09:07; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P202 L2]

Finally, [I] will use a very practical example. We all sit here now and, if all of a sudden there were to be an earthquake, everyone would dash out the door. If you were told to sit here, it is impossible! This would require some training! If you are able to chant Buddha's name one-pointedly, then you may still be able to sit still. Otherwise, you would certainly dash out. Isn't dashing out much easier than sitting here! So the reason we can't is because [we] have not properly recognized the true nature of reality. So the actual hard part is still the proper perception. Once there is proper understanding, everyone will want [to practice

Buddha Dharma]. Thus, to apply the teaching is so very easy! Now the hurdle is exactly here. The author helps us break through one hurdle after another and points out each true nature of reality.