



Book 5
(Chapter 7 and 8)

Commentary on
Je Tsong-kha-pa's
Lam Rim Chen Mo
By Venerable Jih-Chang
English Commentary Book 5, ver 2.0

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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 7 "A Human Life of Leisure and Opportunity"* and *chapter 8 "The Three Types of Persons"*. 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.

CHAPTER 7 : A HUMAN LIFE OF LEISURE AND OPPORTUNITY

Chapter 7 Outline

B. The stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher

1. An exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity

- a. The identification of leisure and opportunity**
 - 1) Leisure**
 - 2) Opportunity**
 - a) The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself**
 - b) The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to others**
- b. Contemplating the great importance of leisure and opportunity**
- c. Contemplating the difficulty of attaining leisure and opportunity**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P117; 30A, 9.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P188 L3]

Now it is necessary to show the stages through which the guru leads the disciple who properly relies on the teacher as previously explained.

Ok! Once we have this foundation in the beginning, then we can say, for those cultivators who can properly rely on the excellent teacher, in that situation, how the excellent teacher should lead the student and what are the stages. Here we might want to go to the outline on page 355. The outline [of the entire Lamrim chenmo] is divided into 4 parts, so Roman numeral I, II and III have all been explained. At the end of that where we begin the actual learning, it tells us the root, that is relying on an excellent teacher. Then once you rely on the excellent teacher, what should you do? Look at the outline on page 356, Roman numeral IV, **“How to lead students with the actual instructions”**. This is divided into two parts. The first one is **“how to rely on the teacher, the root of the path,”** now we know that. The next is **“the stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher.”** There, this order is very plain and clear. Then with **“the stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher,”** it is further divided into two parts. First, **“an exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity,”** the second one is **“how to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.”**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P117; 30A, 10.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P188 L12]

Regarding the outline for cultivation in the future, you must remember it very clearly, be very clear in your mind. Then when you cultivate, when you actually do it, there will be problems surfacing in many places. When these problems come, and since you have learned through the stages previously, you just have to think about it a little, and you know, “eh, the problem is here!” Then at this time, you can mend the problem areas, and immediately, the entire concept will arise. Then your cultivation will advance upward one step after another. Just like when we talk about the machine, if there is some problem with the machine, usually if you know the stages, you would know how to explore. You open it up and you would know where to look, and get to the right spot right away. The problem is resolved and the machine will start again! Well then, with cultivation, it is the same. So now let’s continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P117; 30A, 11.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P189 L5]

B. The stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher. The stages of how the students train their minds has two parts:

Once you have relied on an excellent teacher, how should the students train their minds? This is divided into two parts. The first one:

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P117; 30A, 11.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P189 L7]

- 1. An exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity (Chapter 7)**
- 2. How to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity (Chapter 8 and on)**

What is a “**life of leisure and opportunity**”? What is to “get what is crucial”? (Translator note: The Chinese text seems to have translated the sentence to be “how to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity to get what is crucial.” And so Master goes on to explain.) What is crucial means what is central and important. Everything else is false. You are busy for them all your life and it is meaningless! This is central, true and correct. This is what we need. So what now? You are exhorted to go about doing this. When we truly cultivate, the most important condition, there are three most important conditions. For the self, the first one is you must have the desire to learn and practice the teachings, well then once you have this desire to learn and practice the teachings, you must find an excellent teacher. So to find the excellent teacher is number one. In order to concord with the excellent teacher you must have some capital to cultivate, this is called “**a life of leisure and opportunity.**” Then you must have the correct method for cultivation. With these three things combined, you will succeed. Just like a 3-leg stand, you can’t go without any of them. If any of them is missing, it won’t work! Like that.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P117; 30A, 12.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P190 L2]

Well then since this is the way, it says that we have already found an excellent teacher, now, when we cultivate, we need to rely on our bodies. This body of leisure and opportunity is very important. You absolutely do not want to let it go lightly. You want to keep bringing this concept up, exhort yourself and say, “Ah-ya, do not let this go to waste! This human body is

so rare to have. Cultivation relies on this!” So then you exhort yourself to practice. To our cultivation, this one point is too important! If everyone truly recognizes this point, I feel that it will resolve all the problems we are facing in the temple now. All the petty issues we have now in the temple all stem from not knowing this, it’s all from not knowing this. So now let’s continue. This is the first point. Only when you have this understanding then you can talk about how to get what is crucial. At that time we can go further to talk about cultivation. We don’t even have this now and we want to cultivate right away. Therefore we can’t succeed. So you might want to follow the stages and see.

1. An exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity Taking full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity is explained in terms of three aspects: identifying leisure and opportunity; contemplating its great importance; and contemplating the difficulty of attaining it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 13.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P190 L10]

a. The identification of leisure and opportunity

1) Leisure

First it defines what is “**leisure and opportunity.**” In other words, what is the human body of leisure and opportunity? What is its great, auspicious benefit? And this thing is so difficult to have. It is divided into three parts. If we were to understand the meaning of this human life of leisure and opportunity, it has such great importance, and so difficult to get, then we will really treasure it, we absolutely will not waste it, absolutely will

not waste it! It's just like if we were to have an illness which will result in death, then with some great fortune we found a cure. If we were to take this medicine according to the proper method, it will surely cure the illness. We will very much treasure this medicine and will definitely not let it go to waste. It's like that. Now the medicine to cure this death causing illness is this body of leisure and opportunity which we use for cultivation. This has an incredible significance and it is very rare to have. Let us proceed further step by step.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 15.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P191 L4]

What is “leisure?” What is “opportunity?”

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 15.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P191 L6]

The Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines says:¹⁸⁷

**Through ethical discipline you eliminate
The eight conditions that lack leisure
And many circumstances in a life as an animal.
Through it, you always attain leisure.**

The above says, through ethical discipline, from upholding the ethical disciplines, the merits from upholding the ethical disciplines from our previous lives, we can then eliminate lives as animals and other circumstances, which is falling to the realms of animal and the “**eight conditions that lack leisure.**” What is it called “**lack leisure?**” Lacking leisure means you have no spare time. If you want to do anything, you can't do it without time. Well then when we learn Buddhism? It is the same too. Without this condition you can't do it.

You can't learn. This is the condition for learning Buddhism; it is called "**leisure and opportunity.**" It explains below.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 15.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P191 L11]

According to this, leisure means freedom from a rebirth in any of the eight conditions that lack leisure.

You just have to get rid of the eight things, then that's it! So normally we say the eight calamities. If you can get away from these eight calamities, then you can cultivate. (Translator note: The 8 below are ordered slightly differently in the Chinese text)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 15.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P192 L1]

These eight conditions are stated in the *Friendly Letter*.¹⁸⁸

To be reborn with wrong views,

This is the first one.

Or as an animal,

This is the second one.

a hungry ghost,

The third.

a hell-being,

The fourth.

or without a conqueror's words,

The fifth.

An uncultured person in a border region,

The sixth.

A stupid and mute person,

The seventh.

or a deity of long life,

The eighth. These are the eight calamities.

Is to be afflicted by one of the eight faults that are the conditions which lack leisure.

With any of the eight conditions, once you fall into one of them, you can't cultivate.

After you have attained leisure, which is freedom from these,

Strive to end rebirth.

Only until you are bereft of the eight calamities, can you have the opportunity to practice. So when you do get it, you must exhort yourself! Work hard! This is the time to end rebirth! Below explains.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 16.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P192 L8]

With three of these eight you are unable to know what to adopt and what to cast aside: being reborn in a border region in which the four types of followers [fully ordained monks and nuns and novice monks and nuns] are not active;

Normally we would say, "human," just like that, as if simply referring to having a human body, a human body. But actually this human body of leisure and opportunity is not that simple! When the teachings refer to the difficulties of attaining the human body, it is talking about the human body having been without the eight calamities. So even though you have a human body but if you are in a place where "**the four types are not active,**" then you are in a "**border region.**" So you are still within the eight calamities.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P118; 30A, 17.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P192 L12]

What are “**the four types?**” They are bhikshu, bhikshuni, shramanera, shramanerika. It’s not only in form but it’s the real sublime teachings within. Therefore, many of the classical text will especially explain that there are four kinds of shramana. There is the shramana of the ultimate truth which is the shramana of the supreme path. Then there are the shramana who reveals the path, the shramana who depends on the teachings for their living, and the shramana who pollutes the path. What is “shramana of the supreme path? They are the people who have experiential knowledge of the teachings, have realized the characters of dharma phenomenon, these are all noble beings. What is “shramana who reveals the path?” They can instruct according to the teachings, according to the characteristics described in the teachings without any errors, they can tell us the correct principles. That is shramana who reveals the path. What is “shramana who depends on the teachings for their living?” He tries to act according to the teachings and then on the path he uses the teachings to feed his Dharmakaya and food to support his physical body. This is called shramana who depends on the teachings for their living. What is “Shramana who pollutes the path”. After the head is shaved and the monk’s robe is being put on, he cannot act according to the teachings, this is called shramana who pollutes the path.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 18.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P193 L6]

We reflect upon ourselves for a while, what kind of shramana are we? We won't worry about that now! When this place says the followers of the four types, it means the first three kinds, not the shramana who pollutes the path. Shramana who pollutes the path is not it. However it is exactly the shramanas who pollutes the path, said very clearly in the sutra of 《地藏十輪經》 that in the degenerate age of the teachings, who you should really look for are only the shramanas who pollute the path. Well then during this time, for the shramanas who pollutes the path there has to be a standard, a standard. Those with the correct view are still ok. If you can, go along and approximate the correct view because the path to be revealed is within it! If there is no correct view, then regardless of how well his conducts are, it is useless. In summary, the path is one which is according to the teachings.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 18.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P193 L12]

In other words, in a place where there is no sublime teaching, it would be called the border region. Why is it called the “border region?” It means that you are not born in a place where there is the middle way/path. The middle path is to be bereft of being at the two extreme borders/sides of annihilation and permanence/eternity. Everyone knows the terms. Perhaps there might be some people who do not know it. Just remember it for now, when we get to the section on “insight,” it will be explained very clearly. It is not only just paths of reasoning, we will immediately feel what is “extreme border/side”, why are they called “annihilation and permanence/eternal” the two extreme sides, what is

“middle” and what is “the middle path” ? Then at that time you will recognize “the path.” This is number one.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 19.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P194 L2]

Being mute, stupid, and having incomplete sensory faculties—which means incomplete limbs, ears, and so on; and lacking a conqueror’s word, meaning born where a buddha has not arisen. If you have a wrong view which misconceives the three jewels, karma and its effects, and former and future lives as non-existent, you do not believe in the sublime teachings.

Even if you were born as a human, even if there is Buddhism, but, sorry! You are stupid, mute, can’t hear, having incomplete limbs, then it is having incomplete sensory faculties. With incomplete sensory faculties, you can’t cultivate. Even if someone tells you, you can’t understand and it becomes useless. Without understanding, it’s useless. Then there are other ways of having incomplete sensory faculties which makes you unable to cultivate. This is not counted! This is the explanation for the first one. The second one is incomplete sensory faculties, incomplete sensory faculties. We seem to see many people who have incomplete sensory faculties, and it doesn’t seem to matter. The reason is this; let me explain this for a bit. When you truly want to cultivate, if you do not have complete sensory faculties, it can’t work! There is a special reason for this, especially for those who are more dull-witted and slow. Of course we see that sometimes, such as in the recordings of Pureland sages 《淨土聖賢錄》, there was a “dull-witted practitioner.”

He also recited Buddha's name and succeeded. That's a special case, that's a special case. We can't use a special case as a standard of measurement. For example now we have Edison as a special case. We can't say that everyone is Edison. This is impossible. We are using a normal standard. For normal standards of cultivation, with incomplete faculties, you can't do it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 20.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P194 L14]

The third kind **“misconceives the three jewels, karma and its effects, and former and future lives as nonexistent,”** that is wrong view, not believing in cause and effect. Well then without a Buddha arising in this world, it is called **“lacking a conqueror's word.”** This is very plain and clear. Out of these four, the first and second which are no followers of the four types, being slow and stupid, and then the last one having no teachings, no Buddha having arisen in the world, under these circumstances, **“you are unable to know what to adopt and what to cast aside.”** You wouldn't be able to understand what we should do and what we shouldn't. Well then the third kind, they can't believe truly in the teachings, of course he can't, he **“can't believe in the sublime teachings”**. With the sublime teachings, he cannot believe and understand. This concept is very plain and clear.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 21.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P195 L6]

The concept is very plain and clear, but actually our understanding of it is quite vague. Why do I say this? If you “understand,” then you immediately turn around

and to look [at yourself] and ask, “Do I know what to adopt and cast aside? Do I truly believe and understand the teachings? This is truly important. If you understand what to adopt and cast aside, you will achieve. If you truly understand and believe in the teachings, you can achieve. So there is a great deal to be learned on these two. At night when we do a review, I will particularly point it out. At that time for those who truly wish to cultivate, you would want to realistically measure it against your mind, “Right! Do I have these qualifications?” If not, then you are only planting virtuous roots. It is more than enough for just planting virtuous roots. It is great for planting virtuous roots! However, if you truly wish to advance according to the teachings, it is absolutely impossible! We should be clear of the distinctions. If it is for planting a virtuous root, of course we will certainly praise this. But because we wish to advance step by step, therefore we must absolutely be strict and diligent. There are two different standards.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 23.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P196 L1]

You will have great difficulty in developing a religious attitude if you are born in any of the three miserable realms, and, even if you do develop a little bit, you will be unable to practice because you will be tormented by suffering.

Other than these four things, being in hell, hungry-ghost, animal realms, it would be impossible to practice the teachings. Even if you occasionally generate a little, the suffering torments you! There is no way to practice, no way to practice. We don't even need to go to the

extent of the three miserable realms. If we were to pick the worst suffering, the worst suffering in the human realm, you have no idea how much better, how much better that is when compared to the three miserable realms. Even when we are in the human realm, can we practice? Can we practice? Today my teeth ache; today my head aches; today I just kind of not feeling well. We don't even have to go to the extent of pain, ah-ya, I am lethargic after breakfast, I feel weak because I'm hungry. Think about it, isn't it? So this won't work, won't work! Therefore once you fall to the miserable realms, it is absolutely impossible. And then.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 23.57, Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P196 L8]

Mahamati's *Clear Words: Explanation of the "Friendly Letter" (Vyakta-pada-suhrillekha-tika)* explains¹⁸⁹ that a deity of long life is one who lacks discrimination and lives in the formless realm.

This is a deity level of long life. This is the level which lacks discrimination, which is the 4th level of the form realm. The life span is very long, very long. Formless realm is even above that. (Translator note: Master's explanation of this portion follows the Chinese text and is slightly different than the English text.)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 24.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P196 L11]

Asvaghosa's *A Talk on the Eight Conditions that Lack Leisure (Astaksana-katha)* explains¹⁹⁰ that a deity of long life is one in the desire realm who is constantly distracted by activities of desire. Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Knowledge* states that

the deities who lack discrimination exist in one area of Great Fruit—a land of the fourth meditative stabilization. This area is set off from the rest of Great Fruit in the way that a monastery is set off from a lay settlement.¹⁹¹ Even more, these deities have inactive minds and mental processes, except for the time immediately following birth and during death. Finally, they live for many great eons. It is incorrect to say that a noble being who exists in the formless realm is in a condition that lacks leisure. Therefore, we say that ordinary beings who are born in the formless realm are in a condition that lacks leisure because they do not have the opportunity to achieve the path to liberation. The same can also be said for being reborn as a deity of the desire realm who is constantly distracted by sensual pleasures.¹⁹²

The *Friendly Letter* says that for a deity of long life, it means the level that lacks discrimination and the formless realm. Here, another commentary says, that it also includes the desire realm. So below it explains more, why is it that a deity of long life cannot practice the teachings? It says that this level is in the Great Fruit—a land of the fourth meditative stabilization of the form realm. The place of discrimination [in the mind] perishes there. When one is first born there, the place of discrimination [in the mind] exists, once he enters into that deity level, then the place of discrimination [in the mind] perishes and he will be in a meditative concentration like a piece of wood, for a very long time! Then when he comes out from the meditative concentration, upon death, he will move a bit. So without the place for discrimination [in the mind], you

can't cultivate. Therefore it says that it's like a monastery set off from a lay settlement. Lay settlement is bustling with activities happening. There is nothing going on in the monastery. This is it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 25.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P197 L8]

Well then so since there is no consciousness being manifested currently, when we wish to practice, to train the mind, we need to have the place of compositional activity being manifested first, then we can train and correct it. If you don't even have the place of compositional activity, then how can you train and correct it? Therefore this is useless. **"Noble being who exists in the formless realm,"** well then it is so for the formless realm as well, however it is not true for the noble beings of the formless realms because they have already attained the noble fruit. That is in the formless realm. Ordinary beings, why [can't they practice]? It is because in this place, they do not have the virtuous roots to train in the path of liberation. Therefore they are in a condition that lacks leisure. Well then how about the desire realm? Too distracting, because this place is too comfortable, so can't [practice] either. This we should all know.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 25.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P197 L13]

Thus, with respect to calling these "conditions that lack leisure," the *Clear Words: Explanation of the "Friendly Letter"* states:¹⁹³

In these eight states there is no time for acts of virtue; therefore, they are called "conditions that lack leisure."

In these 8 states, you basically have no way to cultivate and thus they are called conditions that lack leisure. Now you know this, the special characteristic of leisure and opportunity. Well then with its true content, we will do a review at night . So I hope everyone would thoroughly go through this before tonight's review. At that time when I point it out, then those who truly wish to cultivate will be able to start on the path immediately. This is very important, this concept is very important! Otherwise if you just know a little of the words, then you often would just cause harm to yourself. If you judge others by the words, then you have no idea how far you have gone wrong !

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 26.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P198 L5]

2) Opportunity

There are 10 aspects of opportunity, divided into two parts. The first part is opportunity that pertains to the self, and the latter is opportunity that pertains to others.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 26.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P198 L7]

a) The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself According to the *Sravaka Levels* the five are:

Being human, being born in a central region, having complete sensory faculties, Having

reversible karma, and having faith in the source.
[79]

These five things.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 26.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P198 L9]

"Being born in a central region" means that you are born in an area wherein the four types of followers are active.

This is called **"being born in a central region,"** this is called the central kingdom, which is the kingdom where the middle way/path exists. This is called the central kingdom. So what is this suppose to be? It is where the four types of followers are active. **"Four types of followers,"** Buddha is also included in there. Buddha is a bhikshu, a great bhikshu, he manifested as a great bhikshu. Therefore, "I am a member of the Sangha." Buddha said so himself, "I am a member of the Sangha." Of course he is the Jewel of Buddha, but he is also counted among the Sangha community. So the four types of followers include Buddha and Sangha. The areas where they are active means teachings were brought in.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 27.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P199 L1]

"Having complete sensory faculties" means that you are not stupid or mute, and that you have your main limbs, secondary limbs, eyes, ears, and the like intact.

This is easy to understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 27.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P199 L3]

"Having reversible karma" means that you have not done or caused others to commit the five deeds of immediate retribution.¹⁹⁵

What is **"having reversible karma?"** That is you have not done or caused others to commit the five deeds of immediate retribution. We often would say, ah, this karmic obscuration, karmic obstacle, what truly can become obstacles to our cultivation are the five deeds of immediate retribution. Once you commit the five deeds of immediate retribution, no matter how much you cultivate, you will not attain the fruit. As long as you have not committed the five deeds of immediate retribution, then we are training exactly to eliminate this. So we often would say, " Ah, I am an ordinary being! I have great karmic obscuration!" That is giving yourself up! Precisely because you are an ordinary being, you would have obscurations, and that is why you need to work hard at cultivation. In the teachings of Mahayana, even the five deeds of immediate retribution can be confessed. You must be very clear with this concept first.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P119; 30A, 28.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P199 L9]

"Faith in the source" means that you have faith in discipline, which is the root from which all mundane and supramundane virtues arise. Here, "discipline" refers to all three scriptural collections.

What do our minds truly rely on? Meaning, what should we have faith in? We need to have faith in this. This vinaya does not only refer to ethical discipline, but

that it is where all the mundane and supramundane virtues are from. Look! Not only for the supramundane world, but all the good things of the mundane world come from this as well. Therefore, strictly speaking, once you understand this point, no matter what you wish for, even things of the mundane world would come from this. Therefore it refers to all three scriptural collections. Speaking of the “faith in the source”, it is really difficult! We often say we believe in Buddha. Not only do we believe, if you do not have absolute faith, you wouldn’t become a monk. Yes, as I said earlier, it is adequate for planting virtuous seeds. You may have figured out a little, but if you are talking about truly advancing in your trainings, then you still have a long way to go. Our faith is indeed still lagging far behind.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 00.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P201 L1]

These five are called "aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself" because they are included in your mind-stream and are favorable conditions for practicing the teaching.

These five things are related to ourselves. These are the requirements for cultivation. Therefore they are called “**aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself.**” You would need to have them. Then externally there must be concordant conditions as well.

b) The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to others

The five are:¹⁹⁶

That a buddha has visited, that the sublime teaching is being taught,

**That the teaching remains, that there
are those who follow it,
That there is caring for others.
So below explains.**

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 00.26; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P201 L3]**

**Among these, "that a buddha has visited," (or is
appearing), means that a bodhisattva has
accumulated the collections of merit and sublime
wisdom for three countless eons, and has reached
the heart of enlightenment; i.e., become a perfect
buddha.**

This is **"a buddha has visited."** We often would say, ah, Buddha has appeared, as if it is such a simple sentence to say that Buddha has appeared. Why does it tell us below, it has taken so long to accumulate the collections of merits and sublime wisdom, why does it say that? It tells us this is difficult to have and it's very precious! To have a Buddha appear in this world, we have no idea how long it takes! And in this lengthy period of time what has he done? He is not being lazy there, but that he has given his heads, eyes, brains and marrows during this lengthy time. Ah-yo, today the temple asks you to do some work for the community, asks two hours of your time, and you feel, ah-ya, this is so tiring. Just like that. In the end, the work that you have done benefits you and you don't even wish to do it. But Buddha has spent countless eons [asaṅkhyākalpas] to give away his heads, eyes, brains and marrows, and the benefits are given to others. So what we should learn from this place is that this is not simple! Then with the collections he accumulated from giving away his

heads, eyes, brains and marrows, he still dedicated it to others. So we must think from this perspective, must think from this perspective! All the good things are given to others. Now is it enough to have only Buddha? Not enough! There needs to be a lot of disciples, a great group of people, we don't know even how many people are working so hard at it so that Buddha can appear in the world! We must think from this point then we would be correct! Number two.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 01.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P202 L6]

"That the sublime teaching is being taught" means that a buddha or the disciples of that buddha are imparting the teaching.

That is Buddha has visited, then **"the sublime teaching is being taught."** Eh, everyone may say Buddha has appeared, of course he would be teaching. This is not that simple! Not that simple! Sometimes Buddha may appear without giving teachings! And even when he does teach, he doesn't teach much! With what we said earlier, not only has Buddha gone through three countless eons [asaṅkhyākalpas], there must be a lot of people who are concordant. You need these people to have the sublime teaching being taught. If these people are not there, Buddha won't speak. Look! When Buddha gives teachings there must be what [under what condition]? "When someone asks, when there are causes and conditions!" There must be causes and conditions! Even if there was one time when no one asked and Buddha spoke, this still had some kind of cause and condition. Do you understand? So truly, to have these two truly appearing in front of us

it is extremely rare! Then the third one, the third one, it says.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 02.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P202 L13]

"That the teaching remains" means that it is not degenerating between the time of someone becoming a buddha and giving the teaching until this buddha passes into final nirvana. Furthermore, this phrase refers to the teaching at the time its followers achieve it by knowing the ultimate sublime teachings.

In other words, this is **"the teaching remains."** The "teaching remains" does not mean, ah, now the sutras and commentaries remain here. Oh! No. What is it? It is when a follower can achieve the teachings by knowing the ultimate sublime teachings. It is only when the **"ultimate sublime teaching"** remains in the world. Therefore it is only here during the time of sublime teachings. When you get to the time of semblance teachings, there is some resemblance [to the teachings], but when you get to the time of degenerate teachings, there is even less. This is what it is pointing to. It is not talking about sutras and commentaries. So since it is not just our sutras and commentaries [remaining], therefore it's not like we should say, ah! We understand now. Then you can give teachings. No! You must be able to be concordant to the teaching and to attain the realization yourself. Number four.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 03.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P203 L5]

"That there are those who follow" this teaching means that there are some who understand that beings have the capacity to perceive the sublime teaching. They understand this through the very knowledge of the ultimate, sublime teachings mentioned above. These individuals then follow the teaching while teaching others according to their knowledge.

What is **"there are those who follow?"** (Translator note: The Chinese text translates this aspect to be "that the teaching abides and there are those who follow," so Master explains it.) The teaching abides and there are those who can follow it to turn the wheel of sublime teaching. That is **"They understand this through the very knowledge of the ultimate, sublime teachings."** Just like the above mentioned, the person can achieve [realization] by knowing the ultimate sublime teachings. Because he has truly achieved it, therefore he understands. There! He says, "I have done so myself!" Just like that. Therefore with anything if you have truly done it, you would know. Then for such a person holding the sublime teachings, just like what he has experienced, with the entire content which he concords with, or an approximation of the content, he teaches it to us. **"Teaching others according to their knowledge,"** there is at least this, that there is the complete content of the teachings. Another approximation is that even though it is not complete, for example we now would say you need foundation, preparation, and then the actual session. **"Approximation"** is its foundation and preparation. You understand that which is in correspondence and gradually you keep going to get to that state. With

these things, they are all absolutely correct and complete. To give you the correct principles, it is called personal instructions. Regarding how the instruction tells you what to do and what not to do, this is called, “that the teaching abides and there are those who follow.”

#Normally when we say the teaching abides and there are those who follow, what does this require? You must have the lineage teacher’s instruction and that you have experienced it yourself according to the teachings. These are the two criteria. Once you have these two criteria, then you can talk about the teaching abiding and there are those following. If you do not have lineage teachers and you read it yourself, then it doesn’t count. Just having the lineage teacher’s instructions and you cannot actually follow it to experience it, then there is only an approximation, it seems to be right but not truly correct. If you are one with virtuous roots, then you can do it. If you do not have virtuous roots, once you hear this you can only just plant a little virtuous roots. You can’t climb up. We should understand this concept correctly. Lastly.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 05.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P204 L6]

"That there is caring for others" refers to benefactors and those who actually carry out acts of charity by giving religious robes and the like.

That is to say, you have external conditions for your cultivation, external condition for your cultivation.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 05.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P204 L8]

Since these five conditions exist in the minds of others and are favorable conditions for the practice of the teachings, they are called "aspects of opportunity that pertain to others."

This is the exterior, so it is called, **"aspects of opportunity that pertain to others."**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 05.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P204 L10]

The first four aspects of opportunity that pertain to others (as presented here from the *Sravaka Levels*)¹⁹⁷ are at present incomplete for us. However, it is suitable to consider an approximation of three of these four—the sublime teaching being taught, the teachings given remaining, and there being followers of the teaching which abides—to be complete for us. [80]

So then this *Sravaka Levels* is one of the 17 levels in *The Levels of the Yogic Deeds*. He says that these four aspects of opportunity are incomplete for us now. Buddha has gone. Teaching given remaining and there are those who follow the teachings, these two we don't have either. But however, there is still approximation. What is approximation? It is that there is still correspondence to the correct sublime teaching, one can truly be in accordance to the teachings to give explanations of quality, quantity and stages with correctness, completeness and flawlessness. There is enough for us to reflect and pay proper attention according to the teachings, to go along with the meaning of the teachings, to advance without errors. This is the condition that still remains.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 06.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P205 L4]

Therefore I want to explain this more. With approximation, with the point on approximation, the qualifying criterion is flawless instructions from lineage teachers. Without this, you can't even talk about it, you can't even talk about it (approximation)! This point I think we all have experience. Everyone says, "Ah-ya! It's great to have listened to that teaching." But when we ask you to practice, you just feel like you can't apply. What's the reason for that? This is what's missing. Once you truly have "the teaching abides and **there are those who follow**," or even "**approximation**" of that, then once you have heard it of course your mind [would think], "Ah! I understand, I understand this. Ah! I can walk up [this path]" Once you have this, then what's left is as long as you willing, you can walk forward. Without it, even if you wish to walk, after trying to figure things out for a while, you would experience much hardship! We should understand this concept clearly. Here we should feel fortunate! Number one, we now know the content of leisure and opportunity. Now let's continue. Let's see what purpose you can use this for?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 07.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P205 L12]

b. Contemplating the great importance of leisure and opportunity

Here, "contemplating," don't just let this word go so easily. With the great importance of leisure and opportunity, this is what the excellent teacher tells us, but whether we can make use of it will depend on whether we can contemplate it accordingly. If you can't

contemplate it in accordance to the teachings, then even though this precious jewel is sitting here, it is of no use to you, much like scraps of metals. Well we shouldn't say scraps of metals. That is not the right way to say it. It's more like there is something that is very good, and you say, ah-yo! This is the best, the best! So you purchase it and let it sit there without knowing how to use it. It becomes a cumbersome object, a cumbersome thing. I just remembered something. I might as well tell you a story and let you relax a bit.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 09.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P206 L10]

This happened last year. In Los Angeles, there was a Chinese American, I can't remember what he was in, but there is some kind of tycoon of the year in Taiwan, can't remember if he was a textile tycoon or something. Anyway, he was close to a billionaire. He bought a house in Los Angeles, it was extremely beautiful. It was around Hollywood, in the upper class area, probably the one of the richest neighbourhood in United States. Each house is worth a few million dollars. Now, that doesn't seem that high when you compare it to [the real estate] in Taiwan. But if it were 10, 20 years ago, if it cost 5 million dollars, that would be extremely expensive! How much would that be in NT? It would be more than 20,000,000 NT. That one house was worth more than 20,000,000 NT. Wow! The things inside were extremely exquisite!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 09.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P206 L10]

So one day a friend went to visit him. He [the owner] took him around the garden. Ah! Every place was truly well maintained. The friend was filled with admiration. But once he kept going, the friend started changing his views. Not only did he not admire the owner anymore, he turned around and admired himself instead. Why? Once he went inside to look, with every place in the living room, when he got there, the furniture and décor were well protected. You can't sit on it. Can't sit! They were just there for display. Ah! Ah, he thought, what use is there if they are just there for display? That is why he is nervous all day long, so afraid of damaging everything. He had become an asset protecting slave! To others who need to protect their assets, [for example] if I only have one dollar, then I just need to take care of one dollar. If you stole it, then it's ok too. But now he needs to protect more than 20,000,000 [NT worth of items]. I don't know how many pairs of eyes he would need to look out for his things. Of course you can't have the burglars come, but even when friends come and touch it, ah-yo! No. No. No! Like that.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 10.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P207 L3]

This story may seem ridiculous. But we should make a note of this here! Therefore even though we understand, if you can't contemplate on it skilfully, you can't make use of it, then the problem is the same. His old friend at the most keeps after his assets. For instance, he is at most a miser in the end! But if we understand the teachings and cannot use it on our body and minds accordingly, then you will suffer great harm.

What is our usual problem? Once we know and understand the profound teachings, then we use this mirror to show other people's flaws. See, this person, this person is good for nothing! That person is good for nothing, that person is good for nothing. No one has anything to offer in this world. There is only "me" [who's worthy]! Then you are doomed to forever fall to miserable realms. Just as water cannot enter nor stay at the top of the mountain, likewise the noble Teachings will not enter nor stay with one who is full of pride. Ah! And once you grow this habit, then unknowingly your head is...just slants like that. In any situation, you are like that. Wow, this is so frightening!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 11.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P207 L11]

Therefore here, with "contemplating," you must do it well...what is the result from contemplating? You can then truly understand in accordance to the teachings. So we often would say "the light returns to shine inward.". What is having the light return to shine inward? Usually you shine the light on the outside. It's wrong! The inside is filled with darkness. Shine the light inside then it's called illuminating the inside! You shine the light inside, once you see it clearly, ah! There is no mistake, it's that dirty! You then have a chance to wash it clean. Yes! With what you don't know, you need to rely on the excellent teacher, once you know you need to rely on yourself. What do you do? This is it. The crucial point is here!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 12.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P208 L1]

Therefore, “contemplating”, don’t just let this go so easily. What’s even more important is with the direction of your contemplation, you should not get it wrong, you especially don’t want to get it wrong! Usually, if we don’t get the direction of our contemplation right, then when we listen to the teachings, we will start to think, “Ah-ya! This teaching is so true! Just take a look at so and so, he has this problem! That person is just so wrong!” The more you listen, the more eager you become. So after class you would go and tell him, “See, what I said about you is all correct! That’s what it says in the book.” Ah, good heavens! That’s not what Buddhism is. We need to know the characteristic of illuminating the inside. It says.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 12.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P208 L6]

Until death, animals strive merely to avoid suffering and achieve happiness. Therefore, if you do this and do not practice the pure teachings for the sake of achieving lasting happiness, then you are like an animal despite being born in a happy realm.

Well then we are here to practice the teaching for what? We want happiness. But this is not a lasting [ultimate] happiness. If we say we wish to have real happiness, we should do what? We want to achieve lasting [ultimate] happiness. But this kind of lasting happiness differs from ordinary happiness. For us now, with the happiness we wish for, sufferings will follow. And with a little happiness, we will have great sufferings later. Ah! On the way back yesterday, I saw so many great teachers, so many great teachers on the road! What were they? Did you see them clearly? On the

freeway, there was a big truck, trucks after trucks full of them. Ah! When I saw them I couldn't help but to shed tears! Em, before, I thought only this, "Ah! They have degenerated, it's so sad for them!" Now when I see them, I exhort myself. They are great teachers to me! As soon as I see them now I would exhort myself, "Jih-Chang! You feel that you are a practitioner, do you look like one?" Ah! I've got sweat running down my back. After going back, no matter how tired, no matter how tired, when I get in, I would go bow and prostrate to Buddha, and pray. I still would do these things.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 14.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P209 L3]

Do you know the reason why? They also wish for happiness, classic example. If we only wish for immediate happiness, then if you don't do anything bad, you would become like this. If you have done something bad, then the result would be unthinkable. Just like that. These kinds of people are not bad people in their previous lives. So you will not find them abominable. However, they are just lazy and can't stand up on their own, in that kind of state. I am just randomly speaking about this! But there are so many, so many places, where in the end, at every place you will be able to see the mental actions very clearly! You just take a look and will see the character of phenomenon is just as such. That is why when we learn and practice the teachings, we must joyfully persevere. Actually with this thing, the habits from beginningless time are the same for everyone. I am like that too. Ah! Feel tired, need to rest for a bit. Then when we stand we feel that it's suffering too. So

unknowingly as time goes on, we become more and more like that. That's how it all happens. Therefore this kind of happiness is not lasting. It's quite horrifying.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 15.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P209 L10]

Well then if we wish to attain lasting happiness, what would that be? To learn and practice the pure teachings. We must practice! If you do not practice the pure teachings, then what are we busy with? We are busy for things in front of us. But the pure teaching is not aimed for what's in front of us! To practice the teachings, we must work diligently! Just like that. So if you say you don't practice and only work for immediate things, for some happiness, then animals can do that too, absolutely. And they are more powerful than us, way better than us! Do you believe it? There! We might as well explain briefly.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P120; 30B, 15.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P209 L15]

With the lion, we don't even have to mention how a lion jumps, we can't move as fast as a cat! Then flies can fly, can you fly? I can't fly. The flea jumps, "dong," and you can't catch it. If I was trying to run here, I can't cover that much space in one single step! The nose of the dog is much more sensitive than us! There are many things, like bats can see at night, we can't. I've seen this kind of small bug before and we used to call it, "ocean, ground and air." Hey, it is quite capable! When it comes upon water it swims, like that. When it gets on the ground it crawls. Then when you try to catch it, it flies. A person can never match up to that! If we care

for things just around us, then it's not worthwhile to be a human. Why bother to be a human! With such big body, right? When you eat you have to eat so much. It's so easy being a flea, just need to eat a little bit and you are full. You don't need to do anything. Oh! We as humans have to do so many things, this is not ok, that is not ok, why bother being a human! So this place just tells us, truly if you only wish to be busy for this, ah-ya, "you are like an animal!"

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 16.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P210 L9]

As Candragomin's *Letter to a Student (Sisya-lekha)* states:¹⁹⁸

**Just as an elephant calf craves a few mouthfuls
Of grass that grows at the
edge of a deep pit and Falls
into the chasm without
obtaining any,
So it is with those who desire the joys of this
world.**

Just like an elephant, when the elephant sees some grass by the edge of a pit, he eats it. Ah-ya! He ate it not knowing there is a deep pit next to it. When the elephant falls into the deep pit, because the elephant is too heavy, it can't get up. You have to think about if one craves and eats next to a deep pit, one would surely fall. It's the same for us who crave immediate happiness. Oh! This thing is very scary.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 17.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P210 L14]

Not just any life will suffice for the practice of such pure teachings in general or for the practice of the Mahayana path in particular. Consequently, you must attain such a life as was described earlier.

In all, if you truly wish to practice such pure teachings, with some form of body, it can't be any ordinary human body. Especially for the Mahayana path, if you wish to cultivate the Mahayana path, you can't do it with an ordinary body! Well, then what do you need? You must have what was said earlier, to be without the 8 calamities, and to have the 10 aspects of opportunities. So below it gives a citation.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 18.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P211 L4]

The Letter to a Student:

**With a human life you attain the spirit of enlightenment,
Which is the basis for the path to the state of a sugata,
Which brings great mental force, and which equips you to lead all beings. Neither nagas, demigods, vidyadharas, garudas, kinnaras, nor snakes attain this path.**

Oh! The path of the Buddha relies on what? That [ability] which can lead sentient beings. What is it, what is the state that it relies on? That is, you have to be able to generate a great mental force. Only this kind of person can learn and cultivate this. This is what was said before, cultivate the Mahayana path. Well then, when you cultivate the Mahayana path, it is not something that can be done by these beings. Who are they? The Nagas and others of the eight classes. They

are described below. These we often come across. Demigods, though they are better than us. Nagas, though they are better than us, and even the garudas. When the garudas open up their wings, the wings span 300 something 60,000 miles, 3,600,000 miles, not sure how long, but it's quite long! Then when they flap their wings down, the ocean will part, and the largest of nagas can be eaten at once. They are that powerful, just like that. But it's of no use too! So it doesn't matter which class it is.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 19.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P211 L13]

Also the Descent into the Womb Sutra (Garbhavakranti-sutra) states:201

Even though you have been born a human with such limitless suffering, you still have the best of situations. It is difficult to attain this even in ten million eons.

En! True cultivations all rely on being a human. But even if you have been born a human, there could be "limitless suffering." Ah, there are no real peace and happiness in the six realms! But this (the human realm) is a truly auspicious place! How auspicious is it? "It is difficult to attain this even in ten million eons." It is so difficult to attain a human life! Needless to say a human life of leisure and opportunity, even those who do not have leisure and opportunity, even to be those people without leisure and opportunity, it is extremely difficult, extremely difficult to attain! Actually all we have to do is take a look and we'll know. Now we have more than 4 billion people in the world, may I ask you, how many have met up with Buddhism? Those who have met up

with the teaching, how many actually are exposed and believe? For the ones who are exposed to and believe [the teachings], how many actually practice accordingly? If you go into this deeply one step after another, then you will find that it may be less than 1/100,000,000. This is absolutely true!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 20.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P212 L6]

We say that China's population is about 1 billion. So may I ask how many of the 1 billion take Buddhism as their faith? How many have seen Buddha? Not too many. For those who have seen, how many believe? For those who believe, how many can practice accordingly? This is truly difficult! At this time, we want to turn around and reflect upon ourselves. For all of us here, and even those of us who have been ordained, when we reflect upon ourselves, still one foot in the door and one foot outside the door. This is putting it nicely! If we stay there, with at least one foot [in the door], that insinuates we know where the door is. Some perhaps do not even know where the door is and are just running about for nothing! This is certainly a true fact! Like that. So, see below.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 20.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P212 L11]

Even when the deities die, the other deities say, "May you have a happy rebirth." By happy rebirth they mean a human rebirth.

This is true. Even though within the six realms, the deity realm has a better life. But when the deities die, others would say, "Ah-ya! We hope your next life will

be a happy rebirth!” What is a happy rebirth? The human realm. In other words, deities see the human realm as even better [than their own]. Now, we often think of the deity realm. That is so flawed! Perhaps some people would say, “We are not thinking of the deity realm!” That’s great! It’s best not to think about it. But what is called thinking of the deity realm? That is when we crave immediate happiness. That is thinking of the deity realm. It’s very simple. It does not matter what we say with our mouths. When we crave immediate happiness, because it’s happiness! So the deity realm is the happiest place. But true cultivation is not like that. When you truly cultivate you crave the dharma bliss. It is a desire for virtue and therefore it brings about great joyful perseverance and you would work on it arduously. That is what we should understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 21.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P213 L4]

Thus, even the deities hold human life as something toward which they aspire.

The deities all aspire to have a human life of leisure and opportunity.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 22.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P213 L6]

A life as a certain type of desire realm deity—one who has strong latent propensities due to previously having trained in the path as a human—can serve as a basis for initially seeing the truth.

Well then to truly practice the teachings, you would have to be in the human realm, others will not suffice.

But in the desire realm, one can do so under one condition. That is when he was a human, he had already achieved some success in cultivation and his habits (latent propensities) were quite strong. Then even if he is born later into the deity realm, he can still see the truth, in other words, he would be on the path of seeing. Therefore when Buddha appeared in this world, there were many such as Indra, after they listened to Buddha's teachings, they got onto the path of seeing. They have been training in the path in their previous lifetimes. If they didn't train in their previous lifetimes, then nothing would have happened. This is what we should know. Real cultivation truly happens in the human realm.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 22.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P213 L12]

However, you cannot initially attain the path of a noble being during a life in the higher [deities'] realms.

That's how it is in the desire realm, even if you go higher in the deity realms, it's absolutely impossible!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 22.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P214 L1]

Moreover, most desire realm deities are said to be in a condition that lacks leisure, as explained previously. Therefore, a human life is the supreme basis for initially achieving the path.

Therefore, since one has to have trained previously to be able to achieve the path [in the deity realm], thus for those who have just begun to practice, this wouldn't work. Therefore for those who are beginners at

cultivation, the desire realm diety is a condition that lacks leisure. Thus, for initially achieving the path, the human life is the best.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 23.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P214 L4]

Furthermore, since a human life on the Uttarakuru continent is not a suitable basis for vows, there is praise for a human life on the other three continents. Moreover, among these, there is praise for a human on Jambudvipa.

People of the Uttarakuru continent can't do this. The place is "not a suitable basis for vows." Vows are our ethical disciplines. This place is particular in that one, the people of the Uttarakuru continent can't uphold the ethical disciplines and learn the teachings. So truly in the three continents, Jambudvipa is the best, Jambudvipa is the best. This is praised. Now are we in the Jambudvipa or in the E. Purva-vidaha? Different sources say so differently. We might want to say we are in the E. Purva-vidaha, we do have the teachings, but it's not that best. Even though it's not the best, but it's still relatively ok. But like what was said earlier, it is not complete, but there is approximation. So we are absolutely in this kind of state. We might want to understand it from this angle.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 24.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P214 L11]

Therefore, repeatedly meditate with thoughts such as this: Why would I waste this attainment of such a good life?

Therefore, this is what we should contemplate! Contemplating is very important! If we are willing to contemplate, then we will achieve in this life. If we are not willing to contemplate, then even though you have heard the complete teaching, it's still of no use to you, you would waste it away for nothing. How do you contemplate? Now that you have something that was so difficult to attain, ah-ya, this was extremely hard! How can we let it go to waste for nothing, and not get any result from this! How difficult is it? We just said, when we see that there are more than 4 billion people [on earth], and in some 4 billion people, how many actually learn the teachings? Ah! You can't even find 1 in 100,000,000. If we were to look at all of the six realms, then it's even worse! For the ones who have attained this human form, that proportion is simply a speck in a vast ocean, just a speck in a vast ocean of an astronomical figure.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B,25.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P215 L6]

We walk through the doorway every day and we would see many excellent teachers, they are busy day and night. You can count them; they number in the thousands or ten thousands. At any time, even just in our little temple here, you can see tens of thousands of ants, can't even figure how many. Here is still ok. I remember when we were little, there didn't used to be modern toilets. So every morning, ah! You go there and look, ah! At the place that needs to be cleaned up, there are tens of thousands of sentient beings there. There are those that fly above, those that dig below, there isn't an area left out. So you can image, ah! It is

so difficult to attain this human body, so difficult to attain this human body! Now we have attained this and we **“waste this attainment of such a good life.”**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 25.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P215 L12]

When I act as though it were insignificant, I am deceiving myself. What could be more foolish than this?

If now I have gotten it, and I waste it away for nothing, then what is more deceiving and foolish than this! Now when others are just slightly not so nice to you, or just a bit careless with you, you can't stand it! You feel that others....actually, no one can harm you. We are the ones who can truly harm ourselves by deceiving ourselves! Ah! You think you've taken advantage of some situation, “Ah! I've eaten a little more of this, I've done a little less.” We have harmed ourselves! Then “I,” this concept, I am right, we are all hurting ourselves! It is that we are foolish! So from the beginning it tells us, we should know this, that we have been stricken with the three great poisons from beginningless time. Once you know this, then you will be able to truly practice, you truly can do it!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 26.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P216 L5]

So last night a fellow practitioner came to talk to me. Ah! He feels that he is getting happier and happier. The day before yesterday another student came to talk to me as well, “Ah! Before when I was busy there, when I saw others around, I used to feel that why should I be the one doing this? [But] now I am very

happy.” Ah, I truly praise him! Truly praise him! Who was it? It was venerable so and so. You shouldn’t look at him [on the surface], he just listened [to the teachings] and is able to achieve this. He is quite busy doing things by himself. He used to feel that I am so busy and yet you all don’t want to do anything. Ah! Now that he listened to the teachings, he feels that, “I do this,” and he is happy about it. It’s very simple; I am here accumulating the collections. Others have this opportunity too, this wealth, but they don’t want to earn it. We sometimes even laugh at him, ah, he is getting old. He is truly our role model. When we learn the teachings, we need to begin from places like this! Yesterday another students said similar things, “Ah-ya! When I used to see this before, see something within our common ground, ah! I used to feel that someone is so long-winded. Ah! And now, not at all!” Once you understand Buddhism, whether you are busy working, or even when others complain about you, you would feel that you are purifying yourself. Great! The beauty of Buddhism is right here. At that point, that is when you are not being foolish, not deceiving yourself. So now we shouldn’t say that people have offended you, we should understand that we have offended ourselves. That’s what’s most important!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P121; 30B, 28.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P217 L1]

Just this once I am free from continuously trekking the many narrow cliff-paths of leisureless conditions, such as miserable realms. If I waste this freedom and return to those conditions, it would be

similar to losing my mind, like someone dazed by a magic spell.

From the beginningless time we have been in the miserable realms. Doing what? Trekking! Ah! Normally we feel calm and steady as humans. But when you are in the miserable realms, it is just.... We can imagine this. Don't wait until becoming an ant and "dididodo" – meaning: running around all day long. Even when imagining hell or hungry ghosts, being burned all day, so he desperately, ah! Tries to run away, but can't run away, that's the situation. So the word, "trekking," he is in a mental state of extreme pain. We have always been in places like this. We fortuitously escape once to become human, yet we waste it away for nothing. And then what happens? We still go to places like that. Ah, what a pity! "It's like **losing my mind.**" So when others say you are like a piece of wood, like an animal, and we can't take that! But actually when we think about this, ah-ya, we really are just like a piece of wood, just like an animal. Fortunately others have come to tell me, I need to hurry and strive! This is just like we've been casted a "**magic spell,**" as if we have been fooled.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 30B, 29.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P217 L11]

repeatedly meditate with thoughts such as this

We must follow the above and "**repeatedly meditate.**" So with this how do you meditate? Contemplative meditation. So now we understand this. Normally we can't get our motivation up, once you can contemplate and observe this point, ah! Then you will truly work really hard.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 00.11; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P221 L1]**

As Aryasura says:²⁰³

**Human life plants the seed
For going beyond cyclic existence,
The supreme seed of
glorious enlightenment.
Human life is a stream of
good qualities Better
than a wish-granting
jewel.**

Who here would attain it and then waste it?

It says with this kind of rare opportunity we've got, what seeds can we plant? We are in a situation where we can go beyond cyclic existence, to go ashore, and plant the seed of the auspicious and "**glorious enlightenment!**" It's like having the most auspicious wish-granting jewel, and this jewel can amass all kinds of good qualities, like that, and you can go beyond cyclic existence. In this situation, how can we waste it and not get the expected result from it? That is absolutely impossible and you definitely cannot let that happen! Once you have this rare human body, you must get a good result, to go beyond cyclic existence. Then it's right!

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 01.11; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P221 L8]**

And also, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

**There is nothing more deluded
And nothing more confused**

**Than for me to have
found such leisure And
yet not to cultivate
virtue.**

This is from the commentary. In other words, it continuously uses past masters' and Bodhisattvas' words to exhort us! It tells us that once we have this difficult to attain leisure and opportunity, if we do not cultivate well, then we are deluding ourselves. This is the greatest confusion! There is seriously nothing more confused than this, nothing more deluding than this! Don't cause harm to yourself!

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 01.47; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P222 L4]**

**After I have recognized this,
If I remain idle
through
confusion, Great
sorrow will befall
me At the time of
my death.**

If after I recognized this, I still “**remain idle**,” I still don't strive to work hard, then why does that happen? It is still because of confusion. This confusion, a habit from beginningless time that remains, we cannot get rid of it all at once. Therefore we need to confess, therefore we need to contemplate. If you do not do that, then it's of no use even if you understand it. You would still be careless and nonchalant. Ah! You remain idle, just can't get your motivation up. Then at the time of death, when “**great sorrow**” befalls, it would be too late! By that time, it's too late.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 02.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P222 L9]

**When my body roasts for a long time
In the intolerable fires of hell,
Blazing flames of unbearable regret
Will certainly ravage my mind.**

If at that time I cannot tolerate the fires of hell burning my mind, well then at that time, it is a fruit (effect). Where did the effect come from? Eh! It must have been a previous cause. It will be so in the future as well. We can just look at what's happening now. **“Blazing flames of unbearable regret will certainly ravage my mind.”** What is **“unbearable?”** It is a torment of regret, a torment of regret! This strong torment of regret will certainly ravage my mind. This is the **“causally concordant”** effect of the future. Because it is a causally concordant effect, so we can understand it now. How do we understand it? We often can think, ah-ya! In our mind we are often drifty, not feeling right in doing this, not feeling right in doing that, this is the **“blazing flames of unbearable regret!”** We are often in this state of mind, think about it, isn't it true? If you concord with the teachings, you will not have this kind of state of mind. Otherwise, you might be confused and foolish. Ah-ya! This cannot be, that cannot be . We are planting a cause now which will certainly degenerated as an effect in future! So we must exhort ourselves now. Thus this subjective aspect is very clear and precise.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 03.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P223 L5]

**This is a rare and
helpful situation;
Somehow I found it by
chance.**

**If despite my intelligence
I am drawn again to hell,
Then, like one
bewildered by a magic
spell, I will have simply
lost my wits.**

**What is it within me that causes this confusion?
I do not know even this.**

These are all for exhorting ourselves. It says that it is rare, very rare to have this very helpful situation, having this human life is extremely rare! If I truly understand this and do not make use of it, and am drawn again to hell, then what does that make me? Have I lost my wits? Am I a piece of wood? What is blocking me? This is not mentioned here to just tell us this seriously, but that it is actually telling us we need to use this method to continuously seek for the answer, to continuously seek for the answer. We have to be able to stir up our minds and say, "I must strive, I must strive! I can't be careless! I can't be careless!" Then you would be on the right track, you would be on the right track.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 04.34; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P223 L13]**

Furthermore, Geshe Drom-don-ba asked Jen-nga,

Well then, other than the commentaries by the
Bodhisattvas above, below will cite from past masters to

show us what they actually did, and what these past masters said.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 04.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P224 L2]

"Are you mindful that you have a human life endowed with leisure and opportunity?"

When the teacher tells the students, he would say this every time, "Eh, have you thought of this, that you've been endowed with this human life of leisure and opportunity!" They are all like that. It was like this in India then, it is like this in Tibet currently. So [when teachings are given] in Tibet, the rituals always begin with, "The precious human life of leisure and opportunity, it is difficult to attain but easy to lose!" Just like that. He tells you this from the beginning. Actually, it is not for us to just recite it once. He wants us to seriously think about it. Look at the great achievers, they are all like that!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 05.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P224 L7]

Jen-nga replied, "Each time I enter into meditation, I recite:

Every time when this past master entered into meditation, he would recite this. Actually when he recited this, it is not just said with his mouth, but his mind corresponded with it! In the future when we continue to read, we will know how the past masters practiced. That is like "putting out the fire on your head," at the thought of it, ah! I cannot relax even for a little bit. So the sutra tells us, "Even if your head is on fire, you can put aside temporary, but the blazing flames of

impermanence must immediately be eliminated!” Even if your head is on fire, it’s ok! You can wait for a moment. What should we do instead? We must work on eliminating the blazing fire of impermanence! We have to strive at that diligently! Because only a human life can eliminate this blazing fire of impermanence, this is absolutely true. With the head burning or the body burning, it doesn’t even matter to him! We are in such peaceful condition now, and yet we are unwilling to do something! So this is what we must motivate. Therefore it tells us previously, what is the state of our condition? So we must find the answer from here. Then think of ways to motivate ourselves to do the same.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 06.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P225 L2]

Now I have independence and favorable conditions.

**If I do not take full advantage of this time,
I will plunge into the abyss and fall under the
control of others.**

Who will lift me out? [82]

Thus, every time he meditated, Jen-nga first recited this verse of teaching, which is from Candrakirti's *Commentary on the "Middle Way" (Madhyamakavatara)*.²⁰⁵

This *Commentary on the "Middle Way"* consists of this verse mentioned above. It says if at that time when you have attained “**independence**”; to have independence means we have attained the two things of leisure and opportunity, and can go along the direction of the sublime teachings to diligently practice.

Then at that time, if you do not strive and genuinely practice, you will fall [into miserable realms] again! When you fall again, you will be “**under the control of others**”, you will have to go along with whatever they tell you to do. What does that mean? The raging fire in the hell, the hungry ghosts who are extremely hungry, then the animals, it doesn't matter which one; at that time, you are controlled by the external environment all day. Then may I ask you, how can you practice? How can you practice? The words are easy to understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 07.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P225 L9]

Regarding the *Commentary on the “Middle Way”*, let me explain this part a bit. You can't figure this from just reading it. Usually when we read the *Commentary on the “Middle Way”*, we just casually read through the sentence. This verse is stated here for a purpose. What is the purpose here? This means that these great sutras and commentaries are errorless in their order. Therefore with the way we normally learn, we always rush to flip through the beginning part [of the text], eh, and see what is important on the inside (in the middle part of the text). This is why we don't get the benefits. Not only for the commentaries, but also for the sutras. What does this mean? Sutras always say, “Listen carefully! Listen carefully, and think well about this!” Normally, when we read the verses from the sutras, eh, we just flip through, we rush to flip through to read about how to recite Buddha's names, how to recite with one-pointed concentration, and the “Diamond Sutra” telling us about “a mind which does not fix on anything” that's all. We don't [normally] care for the foundation in

the beginning part [of the text]. In other words, whether it is the sutra or commentaries, it tells us what should be the order (or stages) in the beginning. Therefore, as long as you truly follow the stages and the foundation and practice correctly step by step with effort, then you will achieve. The difference (in achievements) is this. Then the following tells us.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P122; 31A, 08.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P226 L4]
You should also do the same.

Commentary on the “Middle Way” tells us, this is a “crucial point!” (Translator note: the Chinese text translates this part as “this is the crucial point and you should learn to do the same.”) Hey, we don’t want to just think of the middle section [of the texts] as crucial parts, but that it is crucial from the beginning. Therefore past masters have said, and sutras also state this, that it is virtue at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. Beginning virtue is virtue, virtue in the middle is virtue, and virtue in the end is virtue. When some people say this is virtue at the beginning, the middle and the end, by that they mean the “introduction” in the beginning, the “core thesis” in the middle, and then the “summary” at the end. Some of the past masters say this is the virtue in the beginning, middle... as virtue of the ethical discipline, virtue of the meditative concentration, and virtue of the wisdom. It doesn’t matter. In other words, this order/sequence is determined, and cannot have any errors to it. This we should understand. When we truly learn, we must learn from this point! We must learn from this point!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 09.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P226 L11]

Contemplate the great importance of leisure and opportunity in this way with respect to your final goals. Also reflect on how important they are in terms of your temporary goals.

Like the aforementioned, we must truly recognize and observe that this human life of leisure and opportunity has excellent and ultimate great benefits. The benefit is not only for the ultimate [goals], but for what's temporary (that which is just in front of us) as well. To us, the temporary goals are also very important, very important. The ultimate is of course important, but why are the temporary goals important? Below.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 09.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P227 L1]

That is, consider how you can easily achieve with this life qualities such as generosity, ethical discipline, and patience, which are the causes of resources, perfect attendants, and the body of a being in high status [rebirth amongst humans or deities].

What do you seek for as temporary goals? The temporary goals are for “attaining high status (in your next lives)!” The temporary attainments of high status mean your resources, perfect attendants and all kinds of other aspects being perfect for you. What do you need to perfect these aspects? You still need to cultivate these things! To cultivate these things you will need your human life of leisure and opportunity. We need to accurately contemplate this reasoning! Once

you understand this, once you understand this reasoning with attaining high status and the ultimate certain goodness, then you can read about the auspicious benefits of the stories of Mr. Yuan Liao-Fan and Yu-Ching Yi Gong. Within this order of sequence, we would then know how to attain high status life after life. When we walk the path, we would know how to take our first step and climb up! Without recognizing this before you read these stories, you would often get in trouble with “the plight of the three lifetimes.” Although you would receive temporary benefits, but that’s as far as it goes. That’s it. I just wanted to mention this while we are on the topic.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 11.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P227 L10]

Think as follows:

In this way, this life is very important in terms of attaining high status and certain goodness [of either liberation or omniscience].

Oh! Analyze as we did previously, whether it is for the benefit of the temporary or the ultimate benefit, this is quite difficult to attain, this is difficult to attain! This human body is very difficult to attain! Once you understand this, then what would you do? Of course then we would work hard. Therefore.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 11.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P227 L13]

If I were to waste it and not strive day and night to create the causes of these two goals, it would be as if I were returning empty-handed from a land of

jewels. Also, I will be bereft of happiness in the future and will not obtain a life of leisure.

If you understood this and did not strive...whether it is during the day or even night time, you would strive with all that you've got. It has already told us before, how to strive in the day time and how to strive at night. Strive to do what? Strive at the cause. If you can accumulate the cause, then in the future you will receive this effect. Therefore here, and at many places, it's not like the ordinary essays that we read, it will always say, "**causes of these two goals.**" This is the true beauty and goodness of character of phenomenon! Why do I say this? These words, "**causes of these two goals,**" remind us of what? That cultivation/practice comes with hardship. It reminds us this. We often don't realize that and feel, ah-ya! This place is like a non-Buddhist place. We only talk about temporary happiness, just talk about temporary comforts, and go along with what my views are – I want this, this is right, that is right, then find all kinds of happiness for ourselves. If you understand these words, you will know clearly, it's not what "I" think is right, no! I am wrong. It is not about the immediate feeling of happiness now; it should be hard work and hardship now. Thereafter, you strive to plant the cause and you will receive the effect in the future.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 12.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P228 L10]

Therefore, this is not to say that this is this way because this book was translated from Tibetan. Truly

perfect and complete instructions, the ones with clear explanation of character of phenomenon are all this way. It has its special reason for this. I just wanted to mention this since we are on the topic. Actually, the reason for this is that we must not lack this understanding for cultivation and that the most important practices in the future are based on this. Well then now we understand and have a good grasp of this. Ah! Then you will absolutely not let this go to waste. If you let it go to waste it would be like what? It would be like **“returning empty-handed from a land of jewels.”** As a result? **“I will be bereft of happiness in the future,”** ah! Ai! Will not have happiness in the future and will not attain a life of leisure.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 13.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P229 L1]

Without leisure, I will undergo continual suffering.

Thus, what kind of self deception is worse than this?

If you are unable to attain it, then later, future happiness cannot be attained, you cannot get a life of leisure and opportunity again. Then may I ask you what would be the situation? **“Continual suffering,”** forever suffering. What is more self-deceiving than this? We are so pitiful, we go after taking small advantages of things, and will meet up with great sufferings in the future! This is why I said, this excellent teacher, this excellent teacher is great! (Note: Master is referring back to the example of seeing the pigs as excellent teachers.) Actually for us now, we can all understand this. We can understand what? That what's most serious about this is its ignorance (the pig). The most important thing to note is ignorance. Normally when

we see animals, such as dogs, pigs, and then there are some which are smart, such as dogs. When you feed them, they crowd you right away and follow you for food. If pigs were as smart as humans, then they would know what the owners feed them for. Ah, then when the owners come, they can't wait to run away! Right?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 14.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P229 L9]

So we are now humans and think of ourselves as practitioners. Truly! The words that were just said were not the least bit wrong! Certainly after we understand this, for me, at least for myself, I have been constantly reflecting on this. Ah! I'm not even as good as animals! Like that. I am a person, if I realized that after someone feeds me he is going to kill me, oh, I can't wait to run away! I will absolutely not want to eat it. At least if you don't eat it you would be a little thinner, and you would be the last to get killed! You would have more chances to run away! Isn't it true? Think about this. So once we truly understand it, at that time, you will not try to take advantage of little things and be harmed greatly by it. So this is why we need to understand cause and effect. This we need to be clear with and understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 15.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P230 L1]

You now understand this principle! Though you understand it now, the next thing is to diligently contemplate it. [Note: The Chinese text has this phrase to diligently contemplate it.] Once you understand it correctly, you must strive to contemplate

accordingly. Earlier the correct view [is presented]. So what is next? To correctly contemplate and joyfully persevere. If you can do this and also able to obtain as well as maintain a state of concordant mindfulness, then you are pretty much on the right track. Cultivations are just these! Hence, cultivation is not just folding your legs together and sitting there, no! It is how you obtain the correct view, how to correctly contemplate the correct view, so that there is a continual vigilance and mindfulness, and they are continually maintained in your mind. Then with whatever thought that arises, or any action of the body and speech, they all concord with virtuousness. That is real cultivation. Then at that time when you prostrate to the Buddha you would have it, when you recite Buddha's names you would have it, even when you are eating or sleeping you would have it too. Of course, when you are sitting down in a lotus position and visualizing, it would be even more so. On the contrary, if you did not get this, then sorry! With whatever you do, you are just wasting your efforts! The Fei-Xian song by Han-Shan teacher says exactly this.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 16.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P230 L9]

As Aryasura says:²⁰⁶

**Those who have obtained a human life rich in virtues
Through a collection of merit over innumerable eons,
And who then, due to confusion in this life,
Fail to accumulate even the slightest treasury of merit**

Will in future lifetimes

Enter the house of unbearable sorrow.

Like the traders who go to a land of jewels

And return home empty-handed,

Just like many “**who have attained a human life rich in virtues,**” through innumerable eons he has finally obtained this human life of leisure and opportunity. But now he is confused, to what degree is the confusion? To waste the merits that has been accumulated through previous lives and to let go of this opportunity to practice diligently for accumulating a little more merits and wisdom. Therefore with all the things you have in the present, these are all products of our diligent hard work from previous lives. We often feel, ah-ya, we want to take advantage of the moment or be opportunistic, so then we can get some benefits. Sorry! If you did not cultivate and accumulate in your previous lives, even if you use trickery methods while being opportunistic, you can’t get it. Therefore whatever you receive is what you have worked hard to accumulate. It is what you should get! So why bother wasting your contrivances? This we should know. Because of this, you should then feel at ease and justified that whatever that is supposed to be yours, you will not be short-changed. And what’s most important is that we strive! Strive on how to cultivate to accumulate for the next life, to get higher status life after life, that’s what’s most important. If we do not understand this point, we are confused, and do not diligently accumulate the merits, then we would end up in a bad place. It would be like having gone to a land of jewels and returning empty-handed. If we did not do well in this life,

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 17.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P231 L6]

**Without the karmic paths
of the ten virtues
You will not obtain a
human life again.**

If you do not cultivate now, how could it be possible in the future? How could it be possible for you to obtain this human body through accumulating on the path of good and bad karma, this fruit of human life of leisure and opportunity? If you don't obtain it,

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 18.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P231 L9]

How can there be happiness without a human life?

Without happiness, there is only suffering.

Then you will have to suffer forever!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 18.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P231 L11]

**Therefore, you have only deceived yourself
before going to the next life. There is
nothing more confused than this.**

Therefore every past master, every sutra and commentary will tell us, there is nothing more confused than this! There is nothing more self-deceiving than this! So now, don't be mad when other people bully or deceive you, [instead,] we should know to be mad at our own "self-deceit" .Then there is hope for us. Therefore, for those who truly learn the teachings, we shouldn't be fighting with others, we should fight with our afflictions, and then there is hope for us.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 18.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P232 L3]

After thinking like this, develop a great desire to take full advantage of this life of leisure and opportunity.

Here it comes! After contemplating like this, this “**thinking**” means contemplation or reflection. When we just listen, that is “study.” So the first thing is that you must be able to understand what you have heard! If you do not understand what you have heard, you must go look for your fellow practitioners. Truly between all of us, we need to converse, but when we converse, this is what we should converse! We would say, eh, what did the teacher say earlier? What did the sutra, Buddha tell us earlier? We need to get a good grasp of it. Once you get a good grasp of it, you contemplate. When you do contemplate like so, then in your mind you would feel this, ah, it’s so true! You will then be compelled to devote your entire attention on this. To do what? To have this “**great desire to take full advantage this life of leisure and opportunity.**” You would say, “Ah! I don’t care for anything else now, I don’t care for anything else!” With your whole heart, you will only do this one thing. This is the center of solidity. This is important! This is called “the desire for virtue.” Once you have this desire for virtue, you will succeed! You will then joyfully persevere! You won’t need others to press you, even when others don’t press you, you will strive with all your might, needless to say when others come and urge you.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 19.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P232 L12]

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds: ²⁰⁷

**Once you have given this
body wages and bonuses,
You must make it act for
your welfare. Do not give it
everything If it does not
help you.**

There! In the mundane world, if you hire someone for work, once you give him the wages, you expect him to do something for your benefit. Isn't so? Of course! If now there is no benefit to you at all, then you shouldn't give him anything. That's absolutely true! You hire a worker, and this worker wants \$100 or \$1000, then he needs to work for it! If he came and did not do anything for you, of course you wouldn't give him [money]! Now we have obtained this human body that it is so difficult to attain, so you feed it, clothe it, and give it shelter. Ah-yo, it's not enough eating this! Ah-ya, can't go without fruits either! Ah-ya, can't go without tofu! Ah-ya, we can't go without something! After eating so much, how much has it benefited you? This you want to contemplate and reflect! If there is no benefit to us, then you shouldn't give them to it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P123; 31A, 20.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P233 L7]

Also:

**Relying on the boat of a human body,
Free yourself from the great river of suffering.**

**Because this boat is difficult to obtain again,
Do not sleep now, fool!**

Once we obtained this “**boat of human body**,” this boat is used for crossing the great rebirth river of suffering! This boat is so difficult, so difficult to attain! So we must under no circumstance let it go to waste. However, we are not purposely wasting it, but we are foolish. Therefore we must exhort ourselves, while there is still time, we absolutely do not want to let it go to waste! Absolutely do not want to let it go to waste! This “**sleep**” does not mean sleeping at night, but that being in a foolish dream of ignorance means sleeping. In this ignorance, to break this dream of ignorance is what we aim our study on. So this includes having the correct view. The first thing to do is to establish the correct view. Then at that time, you will feel that you cannot forbear. You cannot forbear what? You can’t forbear that in your every thought it is this, “I want it this way.” You would feel that, “There, there, here it comes. This is what I’m fighting against!” Yes, we wish to tell this person to do this, that person to do that. No. [I should] tell myself this – “Oh! You, you are here again! You are being greedy again, you are trying to take advantage again, you are feeling this way again....etc.” That’s how it should be!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 22.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P234 L3]

Furthermore, Bo-do-wa states in his *Jewel Heaps of Teachings Through Analogy* (dPe chos rin chen spungs pa):

**An insect's obeisance, a ride upon a wild ass,
the Tsang (rTsang) person's fish, and buttered
balls of roasted barley flour.²⁰⁸**

**By thinking along these lines, develop the desire to
take full advantage of a human life of leisure and
opportunity.**

This is an example from the past master. This example, each example has a special explanation. We will not explain it here, will not explain it here. Regarding the words from the past masters, each example has an interesting story. But at that time, each story can be told for an hour. These are all important contents which will exhort us.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 22.48; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P234 L8]**

Well then the great importance was told earlier. Once you know of this great importance, ah! You will then strive to practice. Eh, this is still not enough! You still need to have “**difficulty of attaining.**” Once you think about the great benefits and how it’s so difficult to attain, then we would truly use up all of our might. If you truly get these two things down, then every one of us can say, “we can set aside distinguishing the fire on the head.” Even if your head is on fire, you can let it go, absolutely. You might want to try it! So that day I had talked to you about this, I talked to you about this quite earlier, quite a long time ago, there was a fellow practitioner in Los Angeles. I will tell you this again. He just thinks about certain thing, he wasn’t even thinking about this, he wasn’t thinking about leisure and opportunity. Oh-yo, as soon as he thinks about it, he

loses interest in everything, he doesn't want to do anything else except to entirely focus on cultivation. Now even though we understand these principles, yet we can't get cultivation going, it is because we are lacking this from the beginning. Now let us continue to read.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 23.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P235 L2]

c. Contemplating the difficulty of attaining leisure and opportunity

Moreover, whether you start from a happy realm or a miserable realm, it is difficult to obtain such leisure and opportunity. For, the Buddha states in the *Bases of Discipline (Vinaya-vastu)*²⁰⁹ that those who die in the miserable realms and are reborn there are similar in number to the dust particles on the great earth, whereas those who are reborn from there into happy realms are similar in number to the dust particles on the tip of a fingernail.

In the sutra there was this story. Once Buddha was talking to Ananda. He used his fingers and picked up some soil from the ground and said, "Ananda! Take a look! Are there more dust particles on earth or on my fingers?" You all can tell, with the soil on earth versus the little bit on the fingers, can you even compare? There is no comparison! Below, it tells us this.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 24.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P235 L8]

Further, those who die in both types of happy realms [human and divine] and are reborn in the

miserable realms are similar in number to the dust particles on the great earth, while those who die in the happy realms and are reborn there are similar in number to the dust particles on the tip of a fingernail.

It says that for most people from “**happy realms**,” happy realms mean human and divine. Once you die from being a human or deity, those who fall [to miserable realms] are similar in number to the dust particles on earth. Those who can continue to maintain their human bodies are as few as those particles on the fingers. Therefore we should know the chance of you attaining a human form is extremely difficult, extremely difficult!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 25.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P235 L12]

Today let us open up to page 63 (in the Chinese text, English text is P124). The degree of difficulty to attain a human life of leisure and opportunity is beyond our imagination. Thus Buddha used a fact to let us understand the degree of difficulty. So [the text] says that with our human or divine body of the happy realms, we die and are reborn in another life. (Translator note: Did not translate 往生 portion where Shifu makes a distinction between 往生 and 投生.) Those that can maintain a rebirth in the happy realms are as little in number as [the dust particles] on one’s fingers. Just on the fingers, it doesn’t matter how big your finger is, how much dirt can you get on it? And then once you’ve lost this human body, those who fall to the miserable realms are similar in number to the dust particles on earth. In other words, we may not necessarily be [reborn into]

happy realms. In the life and death process of the entire six realms, after your life ends, those who fall versus those who ascend are so far apart in their ratio. Those who fall to miserable realms are as much as the dirt on earth. Those who are able to escape and get to the happy realms are as little as the dirt on your finger nails. This ratio is unfathomable! Now we say, 1/100, 1/1,000, 1/10,000, 1/10,000,000, these numbers can't even be used to compare, can't even be used to compare! The chance of losing the human body is enormous, truly. Like that. Well then why is it so difficult?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 27.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P236 L8]

***Question:* Why is a human life of leisure and opportunity so difficult to obtain?**

We would think why is it so difficult? Below, it will cite from the sutras/commentaries. It explains below.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 27.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P236 L10]

***Reply:* It is because beings of the happy realms-humans and the like-are frequently involved in such ignoble activities as the ten nonvirtues. Because of this, they are reborn in the miserable realms. As Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas states:²¹⁰**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31A, 27.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P236 L12]

**Humans for the most part
Are involved in
things ignoble.**

**Therefore, most ordinary beings
Will surely go to the miserable realms.**

Even people of the happy realms would do all kinds of things ignoble (non-virtues). If you take all of karma and roughly categorize it, it's nothing more than the ten virtuous karmas and the opposite of that, the ten nonvirtuous karmas. Well then now? It is like that even in the human realm. In the end, since bad karma has been created then of course you would end up in the miserable realms. In the animal and hell realms, one has no way to create virtuous karma. This we should know, because they are in great suffering at all times. Then once you are an animal, do they have the ability to discern? Impossible! Cats and dogs, what do they do all day, what kind of karma do they create all day? It's not possible for them to create virtuous karma. This we should know. The only possible way [to do virtue] is in the human realm. Yet when we are in the human realm, we are all creating ten nonvirtuous karma. Up until now we are still, truthfully speaking, we don't really know whether we are creating virtuous or nonvirtuous karma. And yet we feel that we are doing pretty well. It's a pity when we speak of this! What's really terrible is that we don't know when we are creating bad karma. We won't talk about this here. When we discuss the karmic path in detail later, once it's explained, everyone please observe it carefully. I think we will immediately feel that with our every rising thought and action of the body and mind, the times when we are truly concordant with virtues are truly very limited, truly very limited!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31B, 00.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P239 L1]

Due to this, therefore if the causes you create are all bad then of course you would fall.

Not only that, often because we are not careful, we could give rise to very serious consequences. See below.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31B, 00.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P239 L3]

For instance, for even a single moment of anger toward a bodhisattva you must stay for an eon in the Unrelenting Hell.

It says that for us normally, if to a Bodhisattva with spirit of enlightenment, you generate a moment of anger...with this kind of hostility, either you don't have it at all, or once you have it, it would last a long time.

Now for just one moment of that, one moment of that, [the result is] you would have to go to unrelenting hell for as long as an eon. So actually, falling karma is easy [to create], but it takes a long time [to repay], and it is horrendous. But Bodhisattvas won't let you know they are Bodhisattva by putting the word "Bodhisattva" on their faces. So you won't know which one is a Bodhisattva. Especially now on every occasion we look at others' faults. How do you know what kind of person he or she is? Especially if you take it one step further, when we are ordained and have come into the Buddhism circle, certainly there are many [with high advancements] who have come back again, there are all kinds of people. From the level of faith and up there could be many Bodhisattvas [around us]. (Translator note: level of faith is a level of the Bodhisattva) If we

look down on them, may I ask how can you handle [the result of] this sin? This is an absolute fact.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31B, 01.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P240 L3]

From this you can see that we would fall to miserable realms. If you generate one moment of anger, you would have to pay with such a long time, this one moment of anger would result in you being in the unrelenting hell for an eon. If you insist and not let go [of your anger] then we don't know how long you would need to be in the miserable realms! It told us earlier that even if this person has taught you just 4 verses, i.e. kindness from a simple teaching, if you do not treat him with great veneration, you would fall to become a dog for hundreds of lives. If you use this as a standard to measure against, ah, we don't know how great our falling karma is. The possibility of ascending [to happy realms] is extremely rare, extremely rare! Well then since this is so when you do learn the teachings, what happens when you don't learn the teachings? Just take a look at the mundane world, the facts are very obvious!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P124; 31B, 02.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P240 L9]

Still, if you completely clear away previously accumulated causes of miserable rebirths and restrain yourself from engaging in these causes again, you are assured of a happy rebirth. However, doing this is extremely rare.

Truthfully speaking, if we understand the teachings, we can eliminate sins and confess our karmic obstacles. With the previously accumulated bad karma, the causes

of the bad karma which will force us to fall to miserable realms, we can completely purify and clear them away. We can have this kind of resolve to do so. Then once you have confessed, you restrain from committing them again, so that you can withhold yourself from creating new ones. Well then in this situation, of course then our actions consist of all virtuous and pure karma. Once you have virtuous and pure karma, naturally you can ascend to the human and divine realms. So even though this is not absolutely uncommon or absolutely rare and precious, however, those who can actually do so, in reality, there are very few [people who would do that], very few, very few, very few. So then suppose...

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 03.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P241 L3]

If you do not act this way, you will be reborn in a miserable realm. Once there, you will not cultivate virtue, but you will continually commit sins. You will not even hear the phrase "happy realms" for many eons! Therefore, a human life of leisure and opportunity is very difficult to obtain.

If you do not practice like the above, then you will certainly fall, if your karmic cause was such then how can there be a good result? Once you enter miserable realms, you have no way to truly cultivate. Then we are forever in this malicious cycle. Thus through eons you cannot even hear the phrase, "happy realms." So therefore this human life of leisure and opportunity is very difficult to obtain, very difficult to obtain!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 04.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P241 L9]

Tonight, it is tonight right? That's why we are going to review Mr. Liao-Fan and Yu-Ching-Yi-Gong's stories. There is a particularly important meaning [in them]. For those two people, on the surface they seem like really nice people. Hey, hey! How are they actually? Not necessarily [as they seem]! Especially for the latter one, he felt that he was doing great. In the end, the reality was exactly the opposite. For us practitioners now a day, we are generally like that, generally like that, that is not even counting the bad ones, not even counting the bad ones. So when we go into it in more detail, we can divide this into two parts. When we review I will first point out the subjective aspects, when we go further, with this principle, every portion will become very plain and clear. At that time once we understand these two things, we can compare and confirm, then at that time we will gain an absolutely correct understanding, an absolute correct understanding. So here I won't go into it deeply.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 05.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P242 L3]

At the same time this also explains one point. Up until now many people who heard the teachings feel very happy, they feel it's great! It's great! This is still only a principle now. With this principle, how do we truly use this principle on our body and mind? In other words, regarding how to be earnestly and firmly grounded in the way you practice, up until now, truthfully speaking, we haven't formally talked about it. The beginning portion is to allow us to feel happy through hearing, to initiate our great desire to whole heartedly want to advance, to exhort and motivate our

minds. Then we gradually, gradually clear away our obscurations and accumulate the collections [of merits and wisdom]. In this way, while we are gradually advancing, as soon as we hear concordant and correct contents, it becomes easy and quick for us to concord. I just wanted to explain this while we are here. Below cites from the commentaries of the Bodhisattva.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 06.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P242 L9]

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds:

With behavior such as mine

I will not attain a human body again.

If I do not attain it,

I will commit sin and never be virtuous.

With the behaviors I have now, if I have created this kind of karmic causes, then it would be difficult to have a human body again. If you don't have the human body again, then you could only commit sins all day, completely lacking of virtuous karma. Without virtuous karma, of course you are forever in the cyclic miserable realms. Therefore we must hurry to strive while we still have this human body!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 07.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P242 L13]

If I do not cultivate virtue

Even when I have the chance to do so,

**What virtue will I cultivate in a
miserable realm,**

**Completely confused and
suffering?**

Now is the time that we can truly cultivate, and yet we slack off. Once we fall, then our bodies and minds will both be in extreme suffering, how can we then cultivate? How can we then cultivate? Just look at us presently, today we are very energetic, we are very energetic and we still can't seem to cultivate. When we talk about it, oh-yo, we say we are quite enthusiastic, quite enthusiastic about the teachings we heard today, like that. But when we listen, somehow it's hard to avoid sometimes, when we listen, there is just a slip in our concentration, and we would miss something. Or at that moment you start to think, why the time is running so....why can't we end class soon! From the opposing perspective, when you truly begin to feel a bit not well, then you have no way [to practice], no way [to practice]. In our daily lives, this is true with anything. It's like that when you listen in class, but how about prostrations to Buddha? How about morning and night time rituals? Think about this thoroughly, when you have energy, you can't even truly concord. Then when you lose the energy, can you do it? No! We would come upon something small and our minds are irritated. Ah-ya! We just don't know what to do. May I ask then, when you get to miserable realms, can you do it?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 09.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P243 L10]

We don't even need to talk about miserable realms, but we can take a present example and get a feel for it. Needless to say if someone slapped you, even if someone just berated you, ah-yo, you get so agitated! They don't even have to berate you, but just to give you a stare, you would begin to think, why does he stare at

me for no good reason? This will be on your mind for some time. This is pretty clear. Perhaps not even needing someone to stare at you, but that if you ask someone to do something, and he doesn't want to do it, you would think, "Ai, this guy doesn't want to listen to me." So the mind goes into a rage and grows afflictions. But actually you should be the one going there to influence others! So we are actually in this kind of situation and we think we are cultivating. Cannot even fathom how flawed this is! Just a little discomfort and you are long gone!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 9.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P244 L2]

So I remember the time when I had just become a monk, I was following a certain excellent teacher. One day, Dharma Master went to Xi-Zhi. There were two of them who went together. Then all of a sudden, "pa!" He accidentally bumped into a piece of rock and broke the skin on his leg. Oh, if it happened to us we would be all alarmed and stirred up, since we were accompanying guests... Eh, so he thought it was a small thing and did not want to alarm the person he went with. So then after visiting Xi-Zhi, he "dong, dong, dong, dong" came back. At that time we were living in Xin-Dian. Half of his pants was stained with blood, but he was calm and collected, just like that, and came back! When I saw him, I said, "Ah! Fashi, what happened to you?" "It's a minor thing, you get busy with what you need to do, what's all this for?" If this happened to us, ah-yo, if you came back in this state we would try to take care of you. But he won't let me take care of him. So I observed him in secret. After he

is done, he told me, “I went out with someone and accidentally injured myself [on the rock].” Like that! So with this kind of spirit, I still remember it firmly until now.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 10.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P244 L10]

Even when I come to this place, I know that I often lack energy, often lack energy. Sometimes when I stand there, I feel as if all of a sudden I could just fall down. But I feel that, “Ah! This is what my teacher....told me. I often think of Buddha, in the eons of lives of Buddha’s causal period, people have wanted his flesh in those eons of lives. He would faint and almost loses consciousness. He would then tell himself, “Oh-yo! In my past eons of lives, I have lived for rebirth. This is a rare opportunity today, so I must clench my teeth and do this!” Eh, if you clench teeth and tough it out, you’ll get through it. So the will power still remains to be the number one important thing.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 11.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P244 L15]

Therefore, why is it that I especially like this place? I often see our old abbot sitting here. I feel that he is an excellent teacher! In my mind I feel that this is right, it’s right! We need to continue this way to slowly, slowly push ourselves up. From here, you can at any time compare and observe what is the subjective aspect [i.e. the behavior of] your mind. Therefore, always remember this . If before you do anything, you already sound the retreat, then it definitely will not succeed . Conversely, no matter how difficult the situation is, if you say that you must succeed! You must succeed!

You must succeed! Then even if you've ruined your body, but if this will power continues, you definitely will succeed in the future . You need to rely on this. So for us who cultivate the teachings, the most important thing is this . It's just this ! So while we can cultivate, don't waste it, absolutely don't waste it!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 12.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P245 L7]

**If I cultivate no virtue
And accumulate sins,
I will not hear even the name
"Happy realms" for a billion eons.**

This is easy to understand. If one didn't cultivate virtue, but committed sins, in this situation, then you don't know how many [eons] you would have to go through, you can do nothing [during those times]. You can't even hear the name of "happy realms."

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 12.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P245 L10]

**Thus the Bhagavan said
That this human life is as
difficult to obtain As it is
for a sea turtle to put its
neck
Into a yoke tossing about on the vast ocean.**

**If even a single moment's wrongdoing
Causes you to abide in the
Unrelenting Hell for an eon, It**

**goes without saying that you will
not enter a happy realm
Due to sins heaped up since
beginningless time.**

Well this is why Buddha tells us, he says that the human body is very difficult to obtain! How difficult is it? He gave us an example. He said in the vast ocean there is a blind turtle. (Translator note: The Chinese Lamrim translated this sentence with the blind turtle.) This turtle is blind. Then after how long of a time? Some sutras don't say a time, some say after a hundred years it would rise up to the top and stick its head out to take a breath. Then in this vast ocean there was a piece of plank, with a hole in it. You think about this. When would the blind turtle come across this piece of yoke? There is absolutely no chance! Surprisingly, now that this blind turtle which surfaces every one hundred years, in the vast ocean there so happens to be a yoke adrift, and when it rises up, it so happens to put its neck into the yoke. That is also how difficult it is for us to obtain the human body. So with this we need to pay special attention.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 13.56 ; Original
Commentary Script Vol 4, P246 L5]**

Speaking of this, I left out a section earlier, which is very important, very important. So now let us go back to that. Please read line number four on this page (English text is on P124LL6). It had already said that if you generate moments of anger, then you would have to go through eons [of unrelenting hell], so for example, one moment is one eon, two moments is two eons, living in unrelenting hell. The following phrase states.

As this is so, it goes without saying that you will have to stay for many eons in the miserable realms on account of having in your mind-stream the imprints of many sins that you previously accumulated over many lifetimes. These imprints have not been erased by an antidote and have not yet issued effects. (Note: P124LL6~LL1 in English Lamrim)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 14.21 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P246 L9]

This phrase, “**mind-stream**” means our body and mind. Now our human bodies have repeatedly gone through cyclic existence from beginningless time and will continue on endlessly in the future. What does cyclic existence base on to determine our rebirths in the upper realms or lower realms? It is based on the karma which we’ve created, the virtuous karma causes us to rise and the non-virtuous karma causes us to fall. And in our mind-stream, if we are to sum up the non-virtuous karma which we’ve previously created in many eons of lifetimes , we have no idea how many there are. If you have not experienced the effects of the bad karma, then it continues to exist until it ripens. Therefore, these non-virtuous karma, “ **have not yet issued effects.**” Before they issue effects, there is a method to eliminate them. What do you do? You can cultivate corrective practices. Buddhism specializes in corrective practices which aims to counteract them [i.e. the bad karma that have not issued effects]! If you can apply the remedy and purify it, then this bad karma will not issue its effect. But what is our situation now? Since they have not yet issued effects, and we have

not applied the antidotes. In this situation, with so many non-virtuous karma laid here, may I ask, what is the result? Naturally you will experience the results of the bad karma. So **“it goes without saying that you will have to stay for many eons in the miserable realms”**. Ah! Since someone had asked, why is it so difficult to obtain a human body? The reason is this, the reason is this! So I wanted to come back to this point to explain a little.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 16.25 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P247 L7]

Now let us come back and look at what *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* said, this is on the last 4 lines of this page. See the quotation.

***Qualm*: When I experience the suffering of the miserable realms, I will be extinguishing previous bad karma, and then I will be reborn in a happy realm. Hence, getting out of the miserable realms is not difficult.**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 16.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P247 L9]

Some people would think like this, “ok, ok, since you have to experience it, then after you’ve experienced the sufferings of the miserable realms, wouldn’t the fruit of the bad karma be gone since it has issued effects? So at that time, you can again be reborn in the happy realm. If you think about it, it shouldn’t be that hard!” Eh, some of us would think like that. So let’s read on.

#Reply: While you are experiencing the suffering in the miserable realms, you are constantly accumulating sins. Therefore, although you may die in a miserable realm, you will continue to be reborn in miserable realms. Because of this, getting out of the miserable realms is difficult.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 17.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P247 L13]

We need to understand that when we are experiencing the pain, at that time, yes! The sufferings you experience now are the effects of previous bad karma! Yes, it's right! But now when we are experiencing the suffering, aren't we creating future karmic causes? Yes! Well then what karmic cause are you creating now? This is the time you set the determining factor! When we experience suffering, we are constantly creating bad karma, therefore, sorry! This is a malicious cycle. So when you die in a miserable realm, you have no chance to get out. Similarly, we experience this on our body and mind presently, we can feel this. The experience we have now are not necessarily bad karma of hell, hungry ghost and animal realm. However, in the human realm, we are also experiencing virtuous karmic effects and non-virtuous karmic effects. At the time when these karmic effects rise, let's see what are the karmic causes we continue to plant? Then, we can clearly distinguish where we will go in the next life.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 18.33 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P248 L8]

Yes, this happiness and suffering, these are karmic causes of the past. Once the effects are issued, the karma is finished. May I ask you, when happiness arises, what do you do? You grow attachment! Isn't it right? Oh-yo! When something good happens, we feel quite proud of ourselves and very happy. When things don't go along with what you like, what do you grow? Hostility! Isn't it right? So by relying on this attachment and hostility, can you ascend [to happy realms]? Then when things in front of you cause you neither happiness nor suffering, what do you do? Ignorance! So can you ascend with this? Think about this, isn't it so? Even when I do things now, I do many things and I feel, ah, when it goes with my taste, I do it with great vigor, and if it's not to my taste, then forget it! And then when we do many things, we argue and bicker, this happens very often. Think about it? Isn't it right? These are all mixed and sullied karma! Well then if this is even so for us in the human realm, needless to say when you fall to become an animal!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 19.37 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P248 L15]

At long last we now seem to have the intellect to discern, we finally seem to be that way. [We would say,] "Eh! He is not making sense, he is wrong!" You deem yourself heroic and abhor evils as deadly foes, "this kind of people in the mundane world!" In other words, at this time we feel that we are pretty bright, that we have the ability to tell whether others are right or wrong. Too bad with the right and wrong of our own behaviors, we can't see even a little bit. What is the mentality when you abhor evils as deadly foes? That is a

phenomenon of concordance with hostility, eh. Well then sorry, can you ascend to the divine realm with hostility concordance? Many people have done great merits through the attitude of abhorring evils, but this is cultivating karma of becoming Asuras! This is cultivating the karma of becoming Asuras!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 20.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P249 L5]

Then there are many people acting through such attitude, so they would do things themselves, “He can’t do this. I’ll do it!” Like that. So truly, one would exert a lot of effort and give a lot of money, then the result for such is that even if he does not become an Asura, he would be a ghost deity with great power. Otherwise, they could become animals of great strengths like lions and tigers. This kind is like this. Oh, the strength is incredibly great, the mind is so strong, and he just can’t tolerate others. The state of being is quite plain and clear. This is the character of this phenomenon! Then with those who are good to you, you don’t discern what’s right or wrong, ah, since he is nice to you, you always protect him. That is a phenomenon of being concordant with attachment! Therefore, you should inspect yourselves well! Even for us as humans who supposedly can discern what is right and wrong, we behave like this, then when you get to miserable realms, can you escape? Ah-ya, it is not that this karma is done once you experience the effect! When you experience the effect of the bad karma, you would go through it while creating even more bad karma! There are so many of these classic stories [illustrating this].

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 21.24 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P249 L13]

When Buddha was on earth, there was a time when elder Anathapindada offered Anathapindada Park to Buddha. At that time, the honourable Shariputra was supervising the work. Buddha went to take a look. Oh, sometimes he saw pigeons and other times ants. Buddha smiled upon seeing them. Then Shariputra would ask and the disciples would all ask, since Buddha would not easily change his countenance - He smiled! When they asked why? He said, "So and so! Look at the pigeons or the ants on the ground. They have been there for so many great eons, like that. 80,000 great eons, a turn is 80,000 great eons. Then when I look forward to the future, it is unsure even when the ants and pigeons can get out from their current state! So once you fall, you have no chance to exit!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 22.24 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P250 L5]

Here today I can do an experiment with you. The ants, we've talked about this. Look at the karma of the ants, it's very clear. All day, they would go running around, da da da. When they run around, they are normally slow. But as soon as you touch him, eh! The reaction of the ant is very strange, as soon as you touch him, there are two reactions. One is when he points his two teeth at you and is ready to fight you. Another reaction is when he would run away even faster, "ga!" He would run like that. You can see from places like this that this is the karma of his previous life. Do humans have that? Yes. You can examine carefully.

When we don't have much to do, we are just moving about, hanging out somewhere. Even when you sit, you are that way in your mind! This is the character of your mind and it reveals itself exactly as such. Then if a situation arises, and you meet with it; when it attracts your attention, what is the situation? This is the situation: what you don't like, in your mind you are ready to fight it, just like that. Another state would be that since you feel you can't win, you hurry and run! Isn't it like that?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 23.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P250 L14]

Then what experiment would I do with you today? We know that ants really like to eat sugar or something. So when you see ants today, you go and get some sugar water, normally when ants get a hold of this, they won't leave. But when an ant is about to fight, you take some sugar water and tap on his head, then see what his reaction is? Tell me that reaction and then I will explain more to you. We can have a feel for this in many, many places. Have you heard this clearly? Now that you have, then let us continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P125; 31B, 24.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P251 L4]

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds: ²¹²

**Experiencing only the effects of that karma,
You will not get
out—
While experiencing the effects,
You create
other sins.**

This is it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 24.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P251 L6]

After you have reflected on the difficulty of obtaining a human life of leisure and opportunity in this way, develop the desire to take full advantage of such a life.

We understand the principles described above. Then it tells us we should **“reflect....in this way.”** Remember this! It’s not enough to just understand through listening. It’s not enough to just understand through listening! With listening, it’s already difficult, it’s already difficult! But since we have obtained it, then whether it can be truly useful for us will depend on this, **“reflection.”** So be sure to pay attention to this! You have obtained this rare opportunity, you must reflect on this well. When you reflect in this way, then naturally the answer below will be useful for you. At that time, how should you think about this? You would say, **“Ah! This human life of leisure and opportunity is so difficult to attain and its meaning is so great!”** And then? Under this circumstance, if I still crave for things of the mundane world, then I will be harming myself. There is nothing more harmful to myself than this. I would be only deceiving myself. There is only one thing remaining that I should pursue, what would that be? To **“take full advantage of such a life”** to generate this superb virtuous desire!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 25.27 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P251 L14]

Think, "If I use this life for wrongdoing, it is extremely wasteful. In light of this, I will spend my time practicing the sublime teaching."

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 25.27 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P251 L14]

It says if we have obtained this difficult to attain life of leisure and opportunity, and we engage in **"wrongdoing."** This wrongdoing, we should say that when we do not concord with the sublime teachings, that is called wrongdoing. It's not when we go argue and physically fight with others. It's absolutely not just that! Even when you are full of energy but just foolishly sit there, that's not right either, that's not right either! Needless to say when you are not concordant. With the definition of "wrongdoing," we need to understand that there is a standard for the mundane people and there is another standard for the renunciates. Even if you are truly in a sitting meditation, but you are muddleheaded, that would be considered wrongdoing! Even if you are prostrating to Buddha, being muddleheaded, that's wrongdoing! Even if you are reciting Buddha's name, and your mind starts to have all sorts of thoughts, that's wrongdoing! With the standards of what is wrongdoing and what is virtuous deed, we need to understand it very clearly. Well then at this time what should you do? We should **"practice the sublime teaching,"** practice the sublime teachings. If you can truly practice the sublime teachings, then whether you are bowing or prostrating to Buddha, reading the sutras, even sleeping or eating, you are truly increasing your pure and virtuous karma.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 26.50 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P252 L9]

Nagarjuna's *Friendly Letter* states:²¹³

**Since it is even more difficult to obtain a human
life from an animal life**

Than for a sea turtle's head to enter

**The aperture of a yoke floating upon the great
ocean,**

**O King, lord of humankind, make this life
fruitful by practicing the sublime teaching.**

Therefore *Nagarjuna's Friendly Letter* tells us, to escape from being an animal to become a human, it is that difficult! It's just like the turtle meeting up with the yoke in the ocean. Therefore for us now who have obtained this human body, we need to hurry to cultivate the teachings! We must achieve a correct and good result from this! Just like what?

One who is born as a human,

And then becomes involved in wrongdoing

Is even more foolish than one who fills

A golden vessel adorned with jewels with vomit.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 27.28 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P252 L14]

Just like if you use all kinds of jewels, priceless Muni jewels and such, to adorn a most precious golden vessel. Then you use it to do what? Ah! You fill it with dirty things. You use it to hold dirty things. It's the same as our human bodies. It's so difficult to have obtained something of matchless beauty, and you use it to create bad karma. Ah, truly, this ignorance, there is nothing more terrible than it! Now we always feel, ah-

ya, we are smart. That's why we often say, we use our little smartness to harm ourselves. That is the most pitiful thing. What's good is that at least our intelligence is not quite at the level of being extremely bright and can debate everyone down. So if we hurry to correct ourselves, it would be just right!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 28.31 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P253 L7]

And Candragomin's *Letter to a Student* states:²¹⁴

**After you have obtained a human life, so difficult to obtain,
Resolutely achieve just that which you seek.
[85]**

We need to “**resolutely achieve just that which you seek.**” (Translator note: the Chinese version translates it to more like “resolutely achieve the meaning which you have reflected upon.” So Master explains this.) The order is as such, study, reflect, and cultivate to achieve. Now this is what we truly need to do. The above tells us the principles from the sutras and commentaries. The below will cite examples of past masters.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 31B, 28.56 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P253 L10]

Furthermore, the great yogi²¹⁵ said to Jen-nga, “Do it a little at a time.” Jen-nga replied, “I understand this, but this leisure and opportunity are difficult to obtain.”

That is a classic example of a teacher and a student. The “great yogi” is the teacher. “Jen-nga” is

the student. In other words, they are the student and the second generation student of Je Atisha. These two.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 32A, 00.13 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P257 L1]

When he saw that, the teacher saw that the student was working so hard. Now the teacher was someone who worked extremely hard. So he told the student, “You should rest a little.” (Translator note: The Chinese text translates this sentence to be “rest a little”.) Don’t overlook this sentence! For us now, our teachers are always looking to tell us to work hard, work hard, work hard all day, but you are resting all day and just can’t make efforts. You can imagine then, what kind of circumstance it was, the degree of hard work of the student, if the teacher was telling him to rest. And this was the style during the times of the sublime teaching! We should understand this point. We should put this concept in our minds to exhort ourselves. Hey! Then what did the student say? “Yes, Master! It should be that way, but as soon as I think of how difficult it is to obtain leisure and opportunity, I really can’t rest, I really can’t rest!” Therefore, for those practitioners of the ancient times, they were all like that, all like that! No matter how tired, how tired he was, he would feel that how could he even slightly waste away this rare human body. Well then why did he have [this feeling]? Why don’t we have this [feeling]? We have heard this principle today, and how come we don’t feel that way? Think about it, why don’t you feel that way? I now ask you this and I sincerely hope that you would give me a very good answer. Later or when you are doing self reviews or at other times, when you have found the

answer, you let me know, how you should give rise to that feeling.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 32A, 01.40 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P258 L3]

Bo-do-wa said:

In the region of Pen-bo ('Pan [po]) there was a great fortress named May-cha-kar (rMa'i-phyva-mkhar). It was captured by an enemy, and could not be recaptured for a long time. Consequently, there was this old man who was tormented by the loss of this fortress. One time he heard someone cry, "The fortress has been taken back," whereupon he grabbed a spear, being unable to walk, and, dragging himself along with the help of the spear, exclaimed, "How nice it would be if recapture of the May-cha-kar fortress isn't a dream!" Similarly, you must find such delight in the attainment of leisure and opportunity, and you must practice the teachings.

So then Bo-do-wa also mentioned one; these past masters really liked using examples. Actually these examples were what they felt then. Through an example, you can immediately feel it in your body and mind, and in this way, you would immediately begin to practice. He said that in this place, there was a fortress. Fortress would be what was used in the war fares. This fortress was named May-cha-kar. The fortress was very sturdy and magnificent. But during the war, it was captured by the opponent. A long time after the capture of the fortress, the fortress deteriorated. Ah-ya, the people of the older

generation, they felt that the fortress belonged to them originally. Upon hearing that (the deterioration), they deeply regretted the loss. Hey! All of a sudden they heard the fortress was seized, recaptured. Ah! So happy. Even though this person could not walk anymore, had become old, but he used a spear, and tried to go see for himself, practically dragged, and dragged, and dragged, and dragged himself there. Ah-ya, once he saw it, he was so overjoyed and said, “Is it a dream? Is it a dream? We have gotten the fortress back!”

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 32A, 03.15 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P259 L1]

Now that we have obtained the body of leisure and opportunity, we should be this happy too. Ah, it is so difficult, this is like a dream! Once we have attained it, we need to maintain it well to practice! This tells us an example of the past master, that’s how he was. Another thing is how should we be once we have obtained this? Regardless of which one we use, we should continuously to take the principles above, beginning with the principles, then the citations of the sutras and commentaries which substantiate them, and the examples of the past masters; use them to analyze, reflect and practice. We practice until when? Until the time the attitude has been generated properly in your mind, and it’s good enough. But before it is generated in your mind, you need to continue to cultivate it. Therefore.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 32A, 03.56 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P259 L6]

Meditate until you attain the attitude indicated in these stories.

Once you have it, then it will push you forward with all your energy, ah-ya, you would give all you have to cultivate. Then naturally you will be able to practice. If your cultivation method is reciting Buddha's name, you don't need to worry about getting that one-pointed concentration first. You wouldn't be able to stop, even if we told you not to recite. Therefore how can you not get the one-pointed concentration? If you are doing the Zen practice, even if I were to tell you to let go you can't, how could you not get a result for doing Zen? Now I tell you to do this, you would feel, ah-ya, today I ate too much, so I'm groggy. Tomorrow you are too hungry and can't. Then the day after your head aches and can't function. Then later there is something else that you haven't done yet. Well then, you have to wait until what day?! When you speak of it, ah-ya, I think of life and death so much, I can't do this that you are telling me, I can't do that either, I need to go and cultivate. But when you do try to cultivate, you can't seem to get any result. What is the reason? This is it! Therefore the real benefit of the stages of the path is letting us know these things. Once you truly attained the attitude, then it will push you forward with all your energy. All the external little petty things like if this person glared at you, stared at you, or when you got lesser to eat than the others, these things become completely irrelevant. Why would you be pulled away by things like that? Isn't this very obvious? Once you die, why would these things matter? Nothing is left. Now let's continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 32A, 05.23 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P260 L4]

In order to develop this sort of fully qualified desire to take full advantage of a life of leisure, you must reflect on its four elements, as follows:

Therefore, it tells us this principle above. What is the main purpose for this principle? It is to exhort us to not get busy with other things, but to devote our entire attention on cultivating the teachings. Buddhism is the core and it's real. That's what's most important. The mind genuinely only desires this and let go of everything else, doesn't want anything else. Ai, needless to say you would give up all the things of the mundane world, now there is a big temple here, then there are your disciples or lay practitioners...they are all the same. Once you truly gained the way, you tell them what you've understood, that's what's real. Well then to generate this "**desire to take full advantage of a life of leisure,**" there are four main concepts. So it says to "**reflect on its four elements.**"

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P126; 32A, 06.24 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P260 L11]

- **the need to practice the teachings, because all living beings only want happiness and do not want suffering, and because achieving happiness and alleviating suffering depend only on practicing the teachings;**

So the first thing we need to know is that we need to cultivate. Why? It says that without any exception, every being wishes for happiness and does not want suffering. This is absolutely true. But to truly achieve happiness and alleviate suffering, you can only rely on

cultivation. If you do not understand this, do not understand this principle, then we would be wrong. Ah-ya!

We would only seek after little advantages, would only wrongfully seek after present results. Once you truly understand it, then at that time, it won't be that way. Ah, no! You would work at the cause, to plant a happy cause to eliminate this suffering fruit. Only then can you achieve happiness and alleviate suffering. Well then to do this, you can only rely on cultivation. You must have this concept. If you do not have this concept, who wishes to cultivate, it's an arduous task! Once you have this concept, who doesn't want to cultivate?

Because it is happiness! So that's the first one. Well then now you need to cultivate. Is that enough? Not enough. Number two.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 07.35 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P261 L5]

- **the ability to practice, because you are endowed with the external condition, a teacher, and the internal conditions, leisure and opportunity;**

Now since you have to cultivate, but what conditions do you need to cultivate? Externally, you would need the guidance of the excellent teacher. Internally, you would need a human life of leisure and opportunity. With this human life of leisure and opportunity, pay attention to this! A human life of "leisure and opportunity" does not just mean a human body. Just having a human body is not enough. So once you have this human body, you would still need to be without the eight conditions that lack leisure and

fulfill the ten opportunities that we talked about yesterday. This kind of human life is quite difficult to obtain , quite difficult to obtain ! For those of us here today, I don't dare say that you haven't obtained it. But to my understanding, there aren't many who have. But fortunately for us, we have obtained the approximation. As long as we follow it and make effort, you will soon concord with it. If we just stop short here, then sorry! We would still be running in circles outside the door.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 08.34 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P261 L12]

Therefore, in some places these two categories are divided into three parts. The first one says that externally, you need an excellent teacher . The second one is that you need to obtain this human body. Then the third one is that you need the sublime teaching . Actually, the sublime teaching is included in the leisure and opportunity. Once all these are met , that will do . Well then now we know the first one is that you need to cultivate, the second one? You would still need the conditions for cultivation. Once you have the conditions for cultivation, is that enough? There are more that follow.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 09.00 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P262 L2]

- **the need to practice in this lifetime, because if you do not practice, it will be very difficult to obtain leisure and opportunity again for many lifetimes; and**

Immediately what follows is that you must practice in this lifetime. Why? It has been said earlier, it has

been said earlier, that you must have had a cause in the past to experience such effect now. If you don't cultivate, don't plant the karmic cause now, what then can you depend on for your future? If we don't cultivate virtuous karma in this life, what would we create? Bad karma. If we create bad karma then of course we would experience bad effect. Could you cultivate then? Therefore, now we always say, ah-ya, just wait and take it slowly, take it slowly. That's impossible; you can't drag till the next lifetime. Well, then I said, it is not appropriate to wait until the next lifetime, but how about wait until tomorrow and the following day? No. Therefore we come to point four.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 09.40 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P262 L8]

- **the need to practice right now, because there is no certainty when you will die.**

To practice, you must do it today. How would you know you have a tomorrow? Oh, regarding death, there is detail explanation later.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 09.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P262 L11]

Among these, the third stops the laziness of giving up, which thinks, "I will practice the teaching in future lives." The fourth stops the laziness of disengagement, which thinks, "Although I should practice in this lifetime, it is enough to practice later on and not to practice in my early years, months, and days."

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 10.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P263 L4]

With point one and two here, there is no problem with those . With point three and four, what is the purpose for them? It is that we always feel, “ah-ya, we can take it slowly and practice later!” This is a great laziness. This must be refuted and eliminated. What about point four? It says [we tend to think that,] “there is a need to cultivate, but can wait to cultivate later”. This [kind of thoughts] needs to be refuted and eliminated as well. If you can refute and eliminate these two points , the first, to cultivate, while the main point of the second one is still about laziness.

What’s the reason for not practicing? Why? There are many reasons. But in summary there is a specific term for that, it’s called laziness. May I ask when this laziness attitude manifests in your body and mind, if you don’t practice, can it be remedied by itself? It will be eliminated by itself? Of course not. If you don’t practice, it is impossible. That’s how the behaviors of our body and mind are. If you understand this point, then naturally you will see that the path of reasoning is so clear. **You can only practice now, you can’t say let’s take it slowly.** This “taking it slowly”, this one thought is being lazy. In other words, this is nonvirtue. If you allow non-virtue to manifest in your body and mind, it is impossible for it to change by itself. If it can be changed by itself, then there is no use for Buddhism. Why? Because if it can be changed, then why bother having Buddhism to teach you and you having to practice so hard. The Buddhas of all ten directions, without any exception, all explain this, they all have this experience that you must practice yourself,

once you practice then you can change. If we believe in Buddhism, then of course we must understand this point.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 11.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P263 L13]

If we go one step further, if we observe our minds, we would also know that with the mentality of laziness, without upholding ethical discipline, you cannot change. Upholding ethical discipline may mean two things, one is the person or things of the external environment, and the other is internal. For example, if you do not want to do this thing, but the external environment forces you to do it, then there is a force there. The second one is that you know yourself that, ah, I can't do this! To initiate, still needs this force. So without this force to change, its current condition cannot change. This is very plain and clear. Therefore it is truly a remedy for laziness. Since now we understand this, in the future you would still have to apply the remedy, then why bother waiting until later? The more you wait, the more you cannot change! What's the reason for this? What's the reason for this?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 12.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P264 L5]

Let me give you an example, an example. For instance, let's say I ask you to wash your clothes now. Then you decide not to wash it. Not washing it doesn't mean you just leave it alone, but that it continues to get dirtier. When you are washing it now, you think, ah-ya, this is not very easy to wash, I'll just let it go. In the end? The grease and dirt will just keep piling on. So does it

make it easier later? Is that possible? Isn't this right? The later it gets, the force of our practice will relatively be even weaker. Why? It is because your affliction and bad karma are increasing ever more so. That's the situation. Therefore if you truly understand this reasoning, there is absolutely only one way to go about this, you must make efforts now!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 13.14 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P264 L11]

This is why Buddha is a classic example. We often under many circumstances get bogged down by others things, we won't even talk about this kind of person. Then what are the things [that hold us up]? Now, there are absolutely many things we can't seem to accomplish, ah , you can't let go of some little things, or your body is not that good. But Buddha is not like that. Needless to say little things, he knows clearly what are greater versus minor tasks, but he will still make efforts even if it means to give up his life. Why does he do that? Why does he do that? Let me explain this. The most important concept is in your mind. It is in your mind. So the true core of laziness is in your mind. If for you now, regardless of what causes and conditions, you accumulate this lazy karma here, then it will only increase in the future. If now because of your joyful perseverance, you have ruined your body, eh, then so what if the body is ruined? But you have now planted a true cause of joyful perseverance. In the future when you get a human life again, it is precisely this thing that will resurface. Buddha's real achievement of Buddhahood is based on this! This we should know. Therefore, if we are going to talk about cultivation and

you don't even have this concept down, ah, that's just pitiful! Are we clear? So in any situation you should remember this.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 14.27 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P265 L6]

So this reminds me, when I first started, when I was first ordained, my teacher told me, when he hears the bell in the morning, “pong”, he jumps up from the bed. Ai! I feel that this gives me unending benefit; there is unending benefit to me. You ask me, is it comfortable to get up and sit? Of course it's not comfortable! But I know...hai! This word, “comfortable,” is a habit of [craving] softness and warmth from the beginningless time. If you go along with it then you are destined to cycle through life and death forever. If we do not understand this and we talk about Buddhism, what kind of Buddhism are we talking about! Yes, it's very good for planting some seeds. Therefore, we shouldn't just go and accuse others. There are many great Bodhisattvas who are planting seeds for others, and we should praise them again and again. However if you think that you are a practitioner, you should know clearly of this! You should understand it very clearly. Yes! If you stand up and ah-yo, your head is dizzy and then you are this way...that's good! I will then apply antidote to my afflictions! Just like that! Real efforts begin from this. In the opposite, if there are some afflictions which arise, ah-ya, then we are afflicted so we find others to chat and play for a little...no! We should recognize it and go prostrate to Buddha. But when you run to prostrate to Buddha, can you do it? No. But even if I can't, I will fight with you (the afflictions)!

Like that. Eh, then at that time you would be correct. At least you didn't go along with your afflictions. This is very important. When we speak of joyful perseverance, this is what we are talking about. The opposite of that would be laziness, would be carelessness.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 15.53 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P266 L2]

Therefore, before you understand the correct path of reasoning, I can only speak of this much. Later, when we continue on to the next topics, this concept will become very clear to you. At that time with the subjective aspect [e.g mental behaviour] of the afflictions, you will know it. Your habit of craving softness and warmth, you will know it. The correct subject aspect of the sublime teachings, you will know it. The state of applying antidote, you will get to understand all of this. Then at that time when you cultivate, it becomes easy! Even though at present you may not correctly understand it, but by the karma of our previous lives, we believe in the explications of the great excellent teacher. From today onwards, I hope everyone would follow it [i.e. the teachings] and work hard at it. The more you feel muddleheaded and unable to get [vigilance] up, the more you want to tell yourself, "here, here, here it comes, here comes danger, here comes danger!" Yes, when you are energetic, there won't be big mistakes. But when you are muddleheaded and can't get [vigilance] up, that's the most dangerous times. Then we often will get into this kind of situation where we just want to chat with someone, [in such circumstance,] that person would be a true bad friend. Normally when your brain is very

clear, you can chat and won't stray that far. But when your brain is muddled, and everyone is really getting into the conversation, then harm befalls.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 16.58 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P266 L12]

So last night, yesterday was the day of posadha [see Translator note below], the 15th day of the white moon. Ah! I was so touched when I saw [what took place]. Many fellow practitioners came forward to confess and said, "ah...like that." There were just more than 10 of us here, in the end most have confessed. It showed that everyone was truly willing to make an effort. Some people said they had committed various kinds of wrongs. Some said, "The karma of my body, speech and mind are not pure." Some said that they had gossiped about others...etc. Now after you have been purified through confession, you cannot go and commit them again ok?! Well then this place teaches us how not to do that. (Translator note : 'posadha' is also referred to as "upavasatha", "uposana", a self-examination and public confession according to the vows stipulated by Buddha.)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 17.28 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P267 L1]

Normally when your mindfulness [or correct thoughts] are manifested, it's not that easy to do that [i.e. to create sins]. But when you get to a time when let's say you are not feeling that well today, whether it is of the body or mind. Of the body means your health is not that well. Normally in that situation you would sit there [and feel that] the best thing would be if others

would come and comfort, comfort me, or I may go and find someone to chat. Why is that? When you get to that point when you want to sleep but can't, you want to sit up but can't, so at that time that would seem the best place to be. If your mind is afflicted you are especially that way, particularly at the times when you feel you've been taken advantaged of or have been wronged, those are very dangerous times. At those times, all you talk about is who's right or wrong. If you cannot prevent yourself from doing this, then your confession would be in vain. This we should know. Regarding this, I often would say we are doing things in vain, doing things in vain. You would think, "Was it really done in vain?" You unavoidably would have this doubt. Yes! It's good you have this doubt. Later, I will explain clearly at every point. The true beauty of Buddhism is this. Once you understand it, between what's right and wrong, there is just "this much." You will see very clearly of the character of phenomenon. Now let us continue on. It says.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 18.32 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P267 L10]

Therefore, it is acceptable to create a list of three qualities by subsuming these two into one, "practicing quickly."

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 18.43 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P267 L12]

If you subsume number three and four, there is only one phrase for it, practice quickly, practice immediately! Therefore.

[as stated earlier in the Lamrim, “it is acceptable to create a list of three qualities”]

With the four elements before, if you can combine them into three qualities, it would be ok too. The first is that you must cultivate. If you wish to cultivate you need the right conditions. Once you have the conditions you quickly practice. That’s it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 18.57 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P268 L1]

In this case, mindfulness of death is indeed relevant here, but I will explain it later; otherwise this will become too wordy.

If you go from this concept and talk about it, this “mindfulness of death,” the text will explain mindfulness of impermanence as one topic later. But you can also combine it (mindfulness of death) with leisure and opportunity, however it may be too wordy to do so, so he will talk about it separately later, will talk about it separately later. When we actually take full advantage of leisure and opportunity, the first thing that he tells us is to think of impermanence. Before we take advantage of this life, we are exhorted on how to take it, to exert efforts while we have it (leisure and opportunity). At every stage, every stage is precisely where an obstacle presents itself to hinder our minds from advancing. So if you follow the stages and eliminate the obstacles, then one will advance step by step. That’s why the complete teaching is that great! Therefore I often would feel, ah!, when you have obtained such great teachings and do not strive, it is just too bad!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 19.54 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P268 L8]

So I thought that for those of you who are sitting here now, you certainly want to treasure this. This is all the love and compassion from Buddha. Without Buddha's kindness, I won't be speaking with you on this. Once I heard this teaching, I was so overjoyed! I have now found this opportunity to make efforts for my own practice. But my teacher told me, "No, no, you should go back and tell them." My teacher commanded me, and so I had to instruct. That's why everyone has this opportunity, that's why everyone has this opportunity. So if you take what I've said today, what I've refuted you on, you take it and say, "Ah! He is there [doing this]...." If this is so, then you should go back to where you came from, you don't need to be here to listen to this. It would hold me up and it would hold you up. I would rather you all run away and I can practice on my own! But if you feel that, ah!, you have heard this and wish to work hard at it, then I am willing to give you all of this old life of mine. I would be eternally grateful and would have repaid my teacher's kindness. This point...(Master pauses)...this point, I think I am very happy with, I hope everyone would be as happy as me. Now let us continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 20.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P269 L3]

If you reflect on this human life of leisure and opportunity from many perspectives, you will greatly affect your mind.

Eh, now this is interesting here! It didn't say to listen and speak, but what should we do? "Correctly

Reflect.” We have now understood all the principles. These 2 words, these words, you should remember them. Whether you attain achievements or not, it depends on this! Once you have the correct understanding, whether you attain achievements or not depends on this. The first thing is to reflect, then correctly reflect. You are the one who is correctly reflecting, you are this kind of person. Then what effect does that generate? Hey, it “will greatly affect your mind!” Why can’t we accomplish this? Our mind is not able to change, just cannot be changed, and that’s because the old habit is just sitting there. Now that you have gone through correct reflections, then your mind will be affected and changed. What happens when you change? You will go from laziness, carelessness, and creating bad karma to joyfully persevering, exhorting yourself, and accumulating virtuous and pure karma. It’s that simple! Where do you go with your virtuous and pure karma? At least you can keep your human and deity forms [in your next life]. And then you may even get to Pure Land. The best would be becoming a Buddha in one lifetime. All these [achievements] are based on this, all are based on this!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 22.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P269 L12]

Therefore, contemplate as instructed above. [86]

Therefore this is what we should be doing.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 22.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P270 L1]

If you cannot do this,

If with the detail outline earlier, you cannot do one of them, what should you do?

condense this material into three topics:

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 22.34 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P270 L3]

Then you can condense it into three things.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 22.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P270 L5]

what the nature of leisure and opportunity is, how it is important in terms of temporary and final goals, and how it is difficult to obtain in terms of its causes and effects.

Well then you can divide it into three topics and think about it. The first is to think about “the nature of leisure and opportunity.” What is the special quality of leisure and opportunity? What is leisure and opportunity? You have to continuously think about it. The second one speaks of “temporary and final goals.” It says that once you’ve obtained leisure and opportunity, [it is important] regardless of whether it’s for resources at present (i.e. attaining the temporary goal of high status), or for the final goal, [i.e.] the final goal of the certain goodness of liberation and omniscience. What is attaining the temporary goal of high status? There, it is that your life gets better and better every day; it gets better and better every day. With regards to things that we need to seek for first, even in the Sangha environment where we say we can’t find an excellent teacher now; at that time, it wouldn’t be that kind of situation where you can’t find an excellent teacher but that the teacher would be coming to look for you! And

now, our cultivation environment is not that ideal, [however] at that time, a good environment would appear where you would eat well, be clothed well, everything would be good, and benefactors would provide money. These are the benefits at present.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 23.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P270 L13]

In terms of the final goal? That is the ultimate thing which we wish for now. If you are doing Zen, you wish to be awakened; if you recite Buddha's name, you wish to go to Pure Land. But actually this is the first step, and the last step is to reach Buddhahood. But all these would begin from this point, that is you must have obtained a human life of leisure and opportunity, and then make diligent effort from there. So with number two, it means [the importance of a human life of leisure and opportunity] regardless of whether you look from the perspective of the benefits of the temporary or final goals. Number three? It is to observe "how it is difficult to obtain in terms of its causes and effects." It says that this is difficult to obtain. Well to observe how difficult it is to obtain in terms of cause and effect, it will tell us how to do so below. It says.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 24.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P271 L4]

Then take from the above explanations whatever accords with your mind, and meditate on it.

Whichever accords with you, whichever is appropriate, whichever you think is good for you, you follow it to practice.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 24.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P271 L6]

With respect to how it is difficult to obtain a human life of leisure and opportunity in terms of the causes, consider the following. In general, even to obtain just a happy rebirth you must cultivate a single pure virtue, such as ethical discipline. In particular, to obtain complete leisure and opportunity requires many roots of virtue, such as having a foundation of pure ethical discipline, augmenting it with generosity and the like, and when dying making a connection with your next lifetime through stainless aspirational prayers.

We can look at this in terms of cause and effect. So why is it so difficult to obtain? To obtain this human life of leisure and opportunity, what are the causes? So he says that the causes are quite difficult to achieve. We must know that the main cause for becoming a human, i.e. a “**happy rebirth**”, means that you have obtained a human body; this does not take into consideration whether you can practice or not. Just to obtain this human form requires one thing, ethical discipline. Ethical discipline, which is normally our five precepts. The five precepts equate to being a good person of the mundane world; you have to do this. But if we were to take a look at what’s going on presently, truthfully speaking, it’s pretty difficult to do this, pretty difficult to do this! Not to mention for us who are ordained, if you think through this thoroughly. It’s even more difficult for lay practitioners. For the lay practitioners of the mundane world, the discipline of no lying is so difficult. Ha! It is extremely difficult. We don’t want to say that the other [disciplines] seem easy

either. If you carefully analyze and observe, it is truly not that easy! We say that we don't commit stealing. We do not engage in serious crime of stealing, that is absolutely true. But if you read the "Brief Explanation of the Five-Ethical Discipline Sutra", you will see that we constantly violate the discipline of no stealing in subtle ways. And then with no lying, no stealing, and no sexual misconduct, these are not that easy, not that easy [to uphold]. We say well then we don't drink alcohol? Yes, that's right, you don't drink alcohol. However, the abstinence from drinking alcohol has a particular meaning. Sorry! There is still a loophole [in our practice] with respect to this area.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 26.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P272 L4]

And if we wish to go a step further to gain a human life of complete leisure and opportunity, then by just having this is not enough. What else do we need? We need **"a foundation of pure ethical discipline."** Earlier, he only mentioned about ethical discipline. Now over here, pure ethical discipline is required. What is pure ethical discipline? In the Pratimoksa Sutra, there are three phrases in its summary, "Do not engage in any non-virtue, do all that is virtuous" that's called ethical discipline. The next phrase is "Purify your mind." Once you have this, it is considered pure ethical discipline! Now let's think about it, "Purify your mind." Have we purified ours? At least, when I think back and observe myself, I simply couldn't do it! But this is the foundation. Yet this is not enough! What else is needed? **"Augmenting it with generosity and the**

like". Just one thing is not enough, you still need to have generosity and the like, which are the six perfections. You would still need this. Is this enough? It's not enough! You still need this, "**when dying making a connection with your next lifetime through stainless aspirational prayers.**" You will still need stainless aspirational prayers. Before you do things, you need to make your aspirational prayers. Once you have done it, you need to make dedication. The aspirational prayer and the dedication need to be stainless. It's not just by reading, "May these merits be dedicated to all, may all beings and I achieve the path of Buddhahood." It's not just reading it over. No. But our minds need to be truly concordant with it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 27.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P272 L13]

The state of being truly concordant is more difficult to achieve! Normally when we speak to others, we often see the other party [doing something wrong] and wish to advise him. We often will say, "I'm saying this for your own good!" This sounds pretty good. But if you really think about that, is it truly for the good of others? What are the conditions to help others? Let me briefly explain this to you. Normally even if you just have a mind of renunciation, if you have this mind of renunciation, you wouldn't even care if the sky fell down. You would only focus on resolving your problems and not even notice that!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32A, 28.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P273 L3]

Then further, you clearly understand and say, ah! Now there is nothing to be attached to in this world and therefore you abandon everything. But you cannot forbear to enjoy this bliss of peace for yourself alone, therefore you wish to help others. You know full well that all good things [of the mundane world] are worthless, yet you have this spirit to jump into the water with your eyes open, or the spirit of “If I do not go to hell [to help beings], who would?” In your mind there is only love and compassion, sympathy and pity for him. It is definitely not that you can’t stand looking at his faults, or that his ways do not suit you. When you advise him upon these times and say, “I am doing this for your own good”, then no, you are entirely deceiving others. [Actually] No, you are not deceiving others, you are deceiving yourself! If in your mind, it is just like this, ah, I do have this compassion now, and truly what he does has nothing to do with me, but when I see him doing something which is not good for himself, I would then spend time to advise him. This is then called stainless aspiration. Do you have this? I think this is difficult. You need to have these roots of virtue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 00.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P275 L1]

You would need pure ethical discipline, and this is only the foundation. Then you would need to, to the best of your ability, engage in all kinds of virtues, generosity, ethical discipline, the six perfections...etc. You would then still need this stainless aspiration. Normally with the true Mahayana teachings, it is the aspiration to be enlightened, the aspiration to be enlightened. Once you generate this aspiration, then

you will be in concordance. With this point, it is real simple to talk about it. Now let's not even talk about accomplishing it, we don't even know the content of the real spirit of enlightenment. There are very few who do know it. Everyone knows the terms. That's not bad. At least there is a seed. But that's quite a distance away from knowing the true content, quite a distance away. You need to combine all of these things, to have this many roots of virtue, this many roots of virtue. Well then when we get to this point [we would realize], ah-ya! This is not that easy. So he says this is the situation. This is in terms of the cause.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 01.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P275 L7]

As this is so, it is obvious that very few achieve such causes.

As it is now, very few people achieve such causes.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 01.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P276 L1]

Therefore, once you have understood this, reflect on the difficulty of obtaining the general effect, a life in a happy realm, and the particular effect, a human life with leisure and opportunity.

If you take this to compare, to match up, and then reflect on the effect of having a human life, **“the general effect...the particular effect...”** The general effect is obtaining this human body. It's difficult just to obtain the human body. The particular effect is that it is extremely difficult to obtain the rare human life with leisure and opportunity. Up until now, since we do not truly understand the subjective aspects of those

mentioned above, the pure ethical discipline, generosity, and stainless aspirational prayers, our common habit is that we like to go round and round about on the words only. Like that. So I kept bringing this up earlier. Up until now, I too, know that it doesn't mean for us to know the exact content now, but inside here there is an important concept which is what we need to recognize. It points out something we should know for ourselves, that we should at least recognize that "we are ignorant." Once you have this little bit of asset, only then will you have a chance to learn and train in the teachings. Once this mental state has been pointed out, you introspect a little [and realize], ah-ya, this is so right! I am just going round and round about on the words only. I don't really know its true meaning! Once you have this, you are then willing to advance, to learn. Otherwise, we always feel that we really know the principles well, but in reality we are still outside the door.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 02.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P276 L11]

The sutra keeps telling us, he who knows that he is wrong is the wise one. At least he knows he is wrong. Yet we ordinary beings are filled with errors and we feel (still thought) we are the wise ones. That is the most foolish! These two things are not that easy. I felt this for myself many years ago. When I studied, I felt so happy that I understood it, ah-ya, the importance of the correct view, the sublime view. Once a Dharma Master told me, the sublime view, do you truly understand the sublime view? I thought about it for a while, I thought....I seem to understand it? Then he said some principles [behind it], Oh! Yes. With the true sublime

view, in Mahayana, you'll have to be a first stage Bodhisattva to gain it. So then how should you talk about it? You call it the correct view. So I humbled myself more and spoke of the correct view [instead]. Later he talked to me again and said, "You, have you obtained the correct view?" This second time around, I did not act like how I did the first time. I introspected over and over, and felt that I might or might not have understood it well. But internally, I still thought I knew it well.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 03.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P277 L4]

Subsequently, when I went outside to give teachings, ah-ya, many people heard it and felt delighted. And said that this is the core of the teachings - "the correct view!" So while speaking to them about the teachings, I unexpectedly forgot about the doubt that I had earlier. I acted as if I knew it well. Later it was my....a fellow Dharma brother, he told me one day, "ah-ya! To speak of the principle it is so easy, but to practice it and have a feel for it, it is truly not so easy!" So then we casually started talking about the correct view, and began to talk about the subjective aspect of the "self. He said to truly feel the subjective aspect of the "self" is not easy! Needless to mention the finer details of it, even for the coarser aspects, it's hard for us to resonate. If we wish to see and feel the finer details, it is impossible. I had always respected that particular Dharma brother. Even though he is not as expressive and articulate as me, but he is someone who either doesn't speak, but when he does, his words are weighty. I have benefited much from his reminders. I took that

sentence and put it in my mind, and tried to figure it out left and right, tried to figure it out left and right. Ai, I finally figured something out. I took a look! It's absolutely right. I then happily went to look for him and said, "I now finally understood your sentence." What phenomenon did I understand? I discovered a fact that I was an amateur to Buddhism. Eh, when he heard that he was pretty pleased. So he asked me, can you elaborate on that? I spoke for a while and could not quite explain it. But at that time I realized that I wasn't making a mistake, I had a little improvement. But it was just a little. There was a little improvement. What did I discover? I realized that I did not know anything. This is my personal experience.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 05.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P278 L1]

Generally whenever our thoughts arise, we are just going around within the perception of the "self." The perception of the self is the root of ignorance, all are based on this. What is the "self?" You can't even see it. You completely do not recognize it. Needless to mention the finer aspects of it, you don't even know the coarser aspects of it. Under such circumstances, eh! Speaking of it...therefore it is said that, "When you have forgotten the spirit of enlightenment and practice virtues, these are demon's activities". What is the spirit of enlightenment? It is enlightenment. We don't even need to speak of enlightening others. You at least have to enlighten yourself first before you can enlighten others. What should we be enlightened about? To be enlightened on this. At that time, I finally understood. Ah! That's how it is.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 05.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P278 L6]

Therefore, I want to tell you this here that this is not the time to let us truly understand the correct subjective aspects yet. That's absolutely true. Now I have only touched upon this one thing and pointed out the real subjective aspect of it for one purpose, which is what was said earlier. If after hearing this, you can introspect, and see for yourself that, ah-ya, I am truly still going about outside the door, that's the moment we've made great progress, and we would have a chance to improve, [in fact,] you are improving right now. Earlier we have said that when we learn the teachings we need to eliminate the three faults, and what else do we need? We need the six ideas. What is the first idea? We have faults. Oh-yo! When we listen we have great vigor. But what faults? It's still in the books. That...that is of no use. That's training the book. So now at this point, if you gradually continue, then what faults are there? Ah! This is it. So I didn't understand it before! That's when the principles from the books have begun to be applied by you. You are no longer training the book. You have begun to gradually train yourself.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 06.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P278 L14]

So this is one step after another step. That's why I wanted to especially clarify why I've brought this up here. Once you understand this point and then look back, we absolutely will say I do not have this in my

mind. Then you can observe in detail of others and realize that those who can plant these causes are extremely few in numbers. If it's very few, can you achieve this effect? Of course then it's difficult! So this is observing in terms of the causes. Then the next step is? In terms of the effects.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P127; 32B, 07.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P279 L3]

The difficulty of obtaining a human life of leisure and opportunity in terms of the effects is explained as follows. Compared to the number of beings in the miserable realms—beings unlike us—even a mere rebirth in a happy realm seems almost nonexistent.

He said that in terms of the effects, effect means it has already borne fruits. So he said to look at how difficult it is, look at the beings unlike us—beings in the miserable realms. They are beings unlike us. If we look at the beings unlike us, we have no idea of how many there are, have no idea of how many there are. Those who can obtain a human form, if you make a comparison, there are only so few. Therefore, for those in the miserable realms to reach the happy realms, that number seems almost nonexistent. It's just a tiny, tiny bit! If we just take a look at any place, oh-yo! You have no idea how many ants there are, or how many bugs, or how many of the tiniest creatures. When the light is on at night and you take a look the next morning, ah, under the light there are a bunch of dead corpses. That happens even when we have the bug screens. If we didn't have the screens, then we have no idea how many there will be. If we look at the people who fish at

the sea, a few years back they went to the South Pole to fish. When they put down the net, they had a hard time pulling it up. It's that many! Ai! Therefore, it is absolutely true that for the animals, the hell, their primary abode is the great ocean. Ah! If you compare in terms of the effects, the number of beings as humans is extremely small.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P128; 32B, 08.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P279 L13]

Even compared to the number of beings in the happy realms—beings like us—a special life of leisure is very rare. Meditate on this.

And then, we don't even need to talk about the miserable realms, just take a look at the beings like us who are humans. Even if beings obtain a human body, how many can obtain the human body and also leisure and opportunity? If you make that comparison, the number is still so little. In a population of more than 4 billion, how many have faith in Buddhism? Those who believe in Buddhism, how many understand Buddhism? Once they understand Buddhism, how many actually practice it? Ai! It is extremely rare, extremely rare! Therefore we must strive to contemplate, strive to contemplate on this. This is what we should be doing.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P128; 32B, 09.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P280 L5]

Geshe Dol-wa

Dol-wa tells us this. "Geshe" is Tibetan and we normally translate that to Ph.D. or Dharma Master. I have told everyone before, to qualify as a Geshe there is not that easy! Truly if you wish to learn, in the

Gelugpa tradition, there are the three main monasteries. In the three monasteries, the three temples, there are about 50 to 60,000 ordained monks. So each temple will have an average of more than 10,000 monks. You need to study for 15 years before you can be tested for it. Each year, [the number of] those who can actually get the certification, I can't remember if that was for the monastery of Sera or Gaden, but there are only 15 Geshe titles granted. It's like that! Not even one in one thousand! Now [here] we could be just ordained, shaved our heads, and we would call ourselves Dharma Master. Ah-ya, good heavens! After we study for 3 years, ah, that's considered outstanding! But he (a Tibetan in the three monasteries) has to study for 15 years, would still have to test for it, and the chance is one in one thousand. So if you compare that kind of Dharma Master with our kind of Dharma Master, there is absolutely a great difference. This we should know. Thus, this Geshe tells us:

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P128; 32B, 10.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P281 L1]

Greatly value this teaching on the difficulty of obtaining leisure and opportunity. Thus, he said that the practice of all other teachings follows this one.

He tells us to seriously practice this. If you cultivate this well, all the others will follow.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P128; 32B, 10.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P281 L3]

Since this is so, strive at it.

I think we are clear with this concept. What's most important now is how will you reflect and analyze. If you cannot go a step further to reflect and analyze, then at least you need to learn one thing. You should know that, ah-ya, we are far short of what's expected of us! Once you know this, then there is hope for later, there is hope for later. Ok! Well then for the beginning section, we are now at the end of the 2nd scroll. And then? Before we truly meditate/cultivate and take full advantage [of our leisure and opportunity], he has exhorted us to do certain things. Now let us continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P128; 32B, 11.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P281 L8]

Before we continue, let us take a look at the outline. The outline is still on the first page/sheet, the second side of the first sheet (see page 357, English Lamrim). It says "**B. The stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher.**" See the second side of the first sheet, the latter portion. Look, "**B.**" is divided into two parts; the first part is "**1. An exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.**" So it's not that once you rely on the teacher, you train right away! This is the first thing. Yes! You can also say this is practice. The most important thing in practice is this, it is this. So last night we talked about, talked about many of the Mantra rituals. He said that in the Mantra rituals, often the first thing to do is to think about the importance of the excellent teacher, and then the second thing is to think about the human life of leisure and opportunity. I often would use this phrase, "The jewel of a human life of leisure and opportunity, it is difficult to obtain but so

easily lost. Once you obtained this, use it well for practice. Don't let it be used for nothing and achieve no result." This human life of leisure and opportunity is truly the most important great jewel. It is so difficult to obtain and so easily lost. Once you have obtained it, you must make great efforts. Don't let it just go to waste for nothing. Like that. Therefore, don't let it be used for nothing and achieve no result.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P128; 32B, 12.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P282 L3]

You would still have to think, think of impermanence. But generally, we always feel, ah-ya, this ritual is very good. Yes, if you have truly cultivated accordingly, you have practiced this, then if you just think of it a little, the attitude/mentality would fully arise in your mind. But if you have not practiced it, and you just tried to be mindful of it for a little bit, then you are still just planting a little virtuous root. This we should understand, we should understand. For those who have practiced, he just needs to touch upon this lightly, and then ah-ya, his mind will have a strong feeling for this, that it's difficult to obtain a human life of leisure and opportunity. There will be a full attitude of desperately wanting to practice. Thus, there is great power to train for the later topics. If you have not contemplated and trained in this, then even if you read through and say, ah-ya, this is the best! Sorry, it is good, but it's of no use to us. Well then once you have this then you can immediately continue forth with the next. Since now you have this mentality to wholeheartedly pursue and train in the teachings then below it will begin.

CHAPTER 8: THE THREE TYPES OF PERSONS

[32B,11.42 (手抄稿 第四冊 p281L8)]

Before we continue, first let's take a look at the outline. On [pages 69–117, Chapters 4–7 refer to chapter 7 LR overall outline], it talks about the stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher. It has two parts. The first is “an exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.” It is not saying that, after one relies on an excellent teacher, to immediately practice meditation! Sure, for this first task it can be considered a meditation practice, and the genuine importance of meditation is qualification of leisure and opportunity, that is it. So last night, we had much discussion about the ritual of Tantric practice. In it, the first thing is usually to be mindful of the importance of the virtuous teacher. The second is to be mindful of leisure and opportunity. The one I usually practice is this: “the precious human life of leisure and opportunity is difficult to obtain and easy to lose. Once obtained, one should meditate properly, do not squander it fruitlessly.” This human form with leisure and opportunity is truly the most important treasure, it is difficult to obtain and very easy to lose. Once you've obtained it, strive hard, and don't let it pass by fruitlessly, that is it, so don't waste it.

[32B,12.57 (手抄稿 第四冊 p282L3)]

There is more after this, like mindfulness of impermanence. However, often we always feel, well, the ritual is great, yes. If you truly abide by it to practice, after applying it, with just a brief reminder, the thought

will arise in your mind. If you lack the practice, just by reading it once, this effort would still plant some virtuous roots. This we have to understand, we need to recognize the concept. For those experienced practitioners, with one slight hint, well, his mind will have a very strong sense of how rare a human life of leisure and opportunity is, and he will desperately practice to strengthen the capacity. So his meditation that follows will definitely have powerful momentum. If you lack the practice of contemplation, although you think, “Well, this is the best!” Very sorry, the worthiness is in itself, we still can’t benefit from it. Then after having this training in contemplation, the next practice follows immediately, because you are mindfully aspired to study Buddha Dharma. So next the text begins.

[32B,13.56 (手抄稿 第四冊 p282L11)]

English LR v.1 p.129

2. How to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity

How to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity is presented in two parts:

In this section of taking full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity, the author tells us that there are two parts. They are:

[32B,14.04 (手抄稿 第四冊 p282L13)]

1. How to develop certain knowledge of a general presentation of the path

(Chapter 8)
**2. The actual way to take full advantage of a life of
leisure and opportunity**
(Chapters 9 and on)

(手抄稿 第四冊 p283)

The author first tells us about this “path.” It is the path upon which we practice. “General” means the overall outline, which is what we need to establish on the entire learning path of Buddha Dharma. In other words, we need to have certain recognition, and this certain knowledge should be uncontrived, an understanding that will not waver. With this, then step further to the “actual way to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.” That is when you will be ready to take on your chosen path.

[32B,14.51 (手抄稿 第四冊 p283L5)]

Now let's turn to [page 129]. On this page, it is about developing certain knowledge of a general presentation of the path. We don't usually pay much attention to this aspect, we even rarely hear of it. So we claim to apply the teaching, and you better hurry since the human form is so hard to obtain. Hurry up and chant Buddha's name, or hurry up and apply Zen meditation. Why bother with this [development of certain knowledge]? The author has his specific reasoning; in fact, if we want to take the most complete and quickest extensive path, this is the one. So in most authentic teachings, they usually begin with several things for us to recognize. On the board there, the words “cause,

path, effect” are written, or “object, application, effect” or “faith, understanding, application, and realization.” Here, I will briefly explain it. At the causal stage, how can you establish that you want to apply the teaching, instead of taking the worldly path? If this cause is correctly and completely comprehended then, in the future, of course, with this complete and accurate comprehension, in order to reach this encompassing effect stage, one should take the perfect path, and follow it with persistence. Once you abide by this accurate and complete path to advance, the effect stage can certainly be expected. Thus, great teachers said, “cause, path, and effect.”

[32B,16.36 (手抄稿 第四冊 p283L15)]

As for “object, application, and effect,” these are the same. Thus, for this object, what are the objects we currently face? It is the mountains, rivers, and great earth; they are all the objects that we face – both external and internal objects. The external objects are known as physical phenomena, and internal objects are the spiritual phenomena – all of these are what we know as objects of knowledge. One is contaminated and painful, whereas the other one transforms contamination into purification. Through understanding this “object” with proper recognition and knowing what to adopt and what to reject, abide by it accordingly. For the sake of attaining your goal, you need to have an accurate understanding. Based on this recognition, then engage in it, and this is to uphold the practice. So either translating it to “path” or “application” is good. That is, you are advancing on this path, and it will result in the commensurate effect.

[32B,17.36 (手抄稿 第四冊 p284L7)]

As for the above, regardless of whether it is called “cause” or “object,” it is saying that you should have faith and then learn more about it, this is how it works. So in our *Array of Stalks Sutra*, it is divided into “faith, understanding, application, and realization.” Once you have an accurate understanding of this content, by the time you take on the path, it will be very complete. So for those serious practitioners of Buddha Dharma, this is important from the beginning because it allows you to have a complete understanding as well as guides you to the absolute perfect path, which definitely has accurate quality, encompassing capacity, and flawless systematic order. So it enables you to advance very quickly. Even though it may not be as quick as Youthful Sudhana who achieved in one lifetime, one may achieve it in two to three, or even eight to ten lifetimes! So we will not circle around.

[32B,18.41 (手抄稿 第四冊 p284L14)]

Thus, this concept [either terms of “cause” or “object”] may bring various arguments in the future, but we will not discuss it for now. However, there is one thing that we can immediately experience and sense right away. It is our recognition of the two difficulties when applying the teaching. The first one is that the correct view is not easy to establish. So, once we have attained the proper perceptions, then the path-of-seeing follows, and one can discern whether this is right or

wrong. Although we have the discernment, our latent propensity from beginningless time is still there, thus we should apply discernment to transform this latent propensity and then advance from path-of-seeing to path-of-meditation. Great teachers, after having attained ultimate enlightenment, would also say, “Even though I have achieved great enlightenment and realized Buddha nature” – what is Buddha nature? It is the nature of enlightenment. In other words, this attainment is accurate and flawless. However, my latent propensity from beginningless time is still there, what should be done then? That is, to transform this latent propensity by applying the concept I have recognized. The expression is different, but the content is the same – from “path-of-seeing” to “path-of-meditation.” What does it mean? For us now, the key is first to recognize the latent propensity and the second is to remove it.

[32B,19.57 (手抄稿 第四冊 p285L8)]

May I ask, now all of us here claim that we have practiced for a while, have you recognized the latent propensity? Not yet. If you haven't recognized it yet, how can you remove it? Does that mean my chanting of Buddha's name is wrong? It is not wrong! However, for now, we might as well examine it: what states are we in, when chanting Buddha's name now? Of course there are two types, one is the state of eminent teachers, usually, we refer to Venerable Yin-guang, he was a reincarnated being and he came to guide us. In fact, his teaching method corresponds to our abilities, well, that is how it is presented now. His actual attainment of meditation state and what he taught may be very

different. I think we all believe that, otherwise we may not comprehend the explanation of the concept from those who had such attainment.

[32B,20.37 (手抄稿 第四冊 p285L14)]

So in general for us beginners, we can only say: alas, at this contemporary time, look at how troubled the world is, the only thing you can do is focus on chanting Buddha's name! Thus, regardless of what is happening, we just chant Buddha's name, after all, once we get to [Pure Land]... So what is this known as? To carry one's karmic debt over to next rebirth, and this is expressed very explicitly. Of course, there are people who bring up the concept of cleansing karmic debt before their next rebirth; everyone has their own reasoning, we should never argue on this, we should just hold on to the intended meaning. So, actually, even if we were able to go to Pure Land, but we would carry over our karmic debt, once we are there, what should we do gradually? Well, we still need to take the same path! We have to recognize the karmic debt and then we need to purify it. Isn't this a matter of fact? That is how it works.

[32B,21.20 (手抄稿 第四冊 p286L5)]

So, in fact, we think we are applying the teaching but, as far as this expedient approach goes, in order for us to be liberated from this cyclic existence, chanting Buddha's name is the most laudable and remarkable approach! However, to directly purify our current afflictions and then gradually purify our afflicted

propensities, honestly speaking, we are not even close. Isn't it so? Think about it, is it right? This concept is very clear and explicit, why? Because, our understanding of the entire path; let alone the entire path, what is the path? We don't know! All we know is, alas, the world is filled with suffering. As long as you follow Amitabha Buddha to Pure Land, once there, all issues will be resolved. Sure! Just like if we were to study abroad now, this example is very appropriate. After all, what books will we study there? We don't know, we just know it is a good thing to be there, all we have to do is to improve our English, then apply for a passport, go there, and the problems will be solved. Later, our actual study is not this passport or those related matters! This is very clear, very obvious.

[32B,22.25 (手抄稿 第四冊 p286L14)]

Thus, like I have often said here, if we are sincere about chanting Buddha's name, this is a great thing to do. We do not need to talk about promising young monastics... Instead of taking this approach to chant Buddha's name, young monastics should take another route [to incorporate the study of the tenets]. Chanting Buddha's name is still needed, why? On the one hand, I want to go to Pure Land. On the other hand, I want to help others. However, by the time for us to help others, more or less we would have some understanding of the content of the path, this is very important. In fact, this is not just to help others, not so! With this understanding of yours, and by the time you depart from this life, the karmic debt will not be carried over! Of course, if we don't do it right, the residual karmic debt would still be

there. However, if all goes well, you may very likely to be reborn to a higher rank, and this would make a drastic difference. So, it is definitely not about can't be reborn to Pure Land. Just because not only I want to go there, but also taking along others which is even better! Thus, in this situation, the concept of knowing the path is very important.

[32B,23.18 (手抄稿 第四冊 p287L7)]

Moreover, once you understand this concept, your practice will not waver. Otherwise, when we hear the east wind or someone mentions the east wind, we fall for it. This person says this is good or that is good, thus our confidence is disturbed. Alas, to study here is not good enough, and then if you move to another monastery or center, you still have the same attitude. Move again to another location, and in the end, you have not studied well. As for meditation on the teaching, if you meditate for half a day and don't know how to go about it, thus you turn back to study the tenets. An entire life is wasted in such back and forth! So now, here it is telling us to first establish the concept and, once it is established, since it is known as the path, the direction has to be right. Besides, you must "develop certain knowledge." Your understanding must be uncontrived, ah! So this is how it works.

[32B,23.59 (手抄稿 第四冊 p287L13)]

Remember, in the very beginning when we first started, well, first you are guided by virtuous teachers to

learn the entire content of the path, to obtain an accurate understanding. And then, find a place to take our first steps to enter and proceed. For practices that you are not ready to apply now, never use it as an excuse to forsake them. On the contrary, I strive now to eradicate my present obstacles and accumulate merits. Once your ability is strengthened, well, by then you should be able to advance step by step. Remember? Do you still recall [how to accumulate merits and remove obstacles]? I believe most of you still remember. If not, review the preceding sections carefully.

[32B,24.48 (手抄稿 第四冊 p288L3)]

So with this treatise, you should never confuse the systematic order. Once you are confused about it, there may be many times when you might be interrupted by something else in the middle, and you will be lost and the learning becomes difficult. So, with this in mind, now the text tells us, why is it that sometimes you are able to advance step by step? It is because, in the very beginning, you already have a proper understanding of the general outline, and you have also formed an uncontrived perception in mind. So you find your chosen meditation practice now. Not only that, but your effect of meditation will certainly advance as well, and you will know how to take the next step. Without this recognition, then you won't even know whether you should meditate or not. Many people have come here to meditate on the teaching with good intentions as well as endowed with virtuous roots from previous lives. Because they did not recognize the path, they would circle around in the same spot yet consider it is meditation. If by good fortune, one

actually meditates on the teaching, then the obstacles will certainly become gradually purified and eliminated, and merits will gradually be accumulated. Thus, one's ability will be strengthened. Again, when you wish to advance, you do not know how. Needless to talk about not finding the doorway, without guidance, it is hard for us to make progress. Even if you can actually practice and do it right, because one does not know what is to expect next, one still has no other choice but to be stuck there unable to advance. This is where all the flaws are!

[32B,26.12 (手抄稿 第四冊 p288L13)]

So now, we constantly claim: “Well, this achievement in one lifetime is impossible!” Why? You don't have the guidance and don't know how. And yet you are still attached to some unknown concept and think that it is right. How can that be possible? How can that work out? So, in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*, it clearly states that it does not mean we have to take Youthful Sudhana's path. At least we should recognize that there is such a path. For now, we might as well first to remove past obstacles, try to take this path, explore and give it a try, then we will have an opportunity to advance. So, with regards to this, it is very, very important, very, very crucial to develop certain knowledge on the general presentation of the path.

[32B,26.57 (手抄稿 第四冊 p289L4)]

Up to this point, we can also think about it, for instance, like the *Array of Stalks Sutra* – out of many

great sutras, those great sutras would start by telling us how to practice. However, the *Array of Stalks Sutra* did not tell us how in the beginning! First, it starts with the chapter of *Wondrous Adornments of Worldly Masters*. Beginning with Buddha's birth in this world, it follows with this person who came to praise, that person came to praise, and the praises go on for several chapters. Ah! Can't figure out why is it so. Why? Actually, it has a significant meaning; it has specific reasoning, just like that.

[32B,27.32 (手抄稿 第四冊 p289L9)]

So regarding this, if we want to take this complete path, then we should understand how to develop certain knowledge of a general presentation of the path. Even if we are unable to do it for the time being, what should we do? Remember this at the causal stage, oh! So this is the way it goes, that is how it works! Because, at the present moment, I have great obstacles and having many afflictions in this cyclic existence, I strive to chant Buddha's name so I can be reborn to Pure Land. Upon arriving there, I certainly want to take this most direct route. Once you have this concept at the causal stage, later when you arrive in Pure Land, you will not hastily attain the goal of Theravada. At that time, you will take this correct cause that you have planted back at the causal stage, allow it to increase gradually and gradually, then take on this direct Mahayana path. Thus, the point here is: either for now or in the future, we will gain the greatest benefit. After making this decision, next, sincerely take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity. By then, abide by the systematic order to

advance step by step. Now let's take a look at this uncontrived recognition, what is it all about?

[32B,28.53 (手抄稿 第四冊 p290L2)]

a. How to develop certain knowledge of a general presentation of the path

The way to develop certain knowledge of a general presentation of the path itself has two parts:

It is divided into two parts.

[32B,28.56 (手抄稿 第四冊 p290L4)]

English LR v.1 p.130

- 1. How all the scriptures are included within the paths of the three types of persons**
- 2. Why students are led in stages using the trainings of the three types of persons**

The first is saying in this Lamrim, the teaching covers three types of persons: small scope, middle scope, and great scope.

[33A,00.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p3 L1)]

Conversely, it can also be said that the entire path of this Lamrim study can be divided into three major sections. These three sections completely include the entire essence of Buddha Dharma without any oversight. So it is said for these three types of persons, all scriptures are included. "All the scriptures" are what

the sages taught. This concept we have to recognize first.

[33A,00.49 (手抄稿 第五冊 p3 L4)]

And for the next, why are we guided stepwise with these three types of persons? Once you have a proper understanding of these two, all problems will be solved. Now, to put it simply, it means, actually in our study of Buddha Dharma, what is the entire content? That is all included in the three scopes. Thus, for you to engage in all of this, of course, there is a method. These are explained through two aspects: the “quality” is absolutely pure, and the “quantitative measurement” is perfectly sufficient. Then, how to solidify these into concrete facts? While at actual session to engage in it, there is still the requirement of complete order for the stages. Hence, the explanation in the text is based on both [quality and quantity], so the second part “why students are led in stages using the trainings of the three types of persons” is the explanation [of the quality and quantity]. Now, let’s continue with the text:

[33A,01.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p4 L1)]

In the beginning a person who is to become a buddha develops the spirit of enlightenment; in the middle, this person accumulates the collections of merit and sublime wisdom; and in the end, this person actualizes perfect buddhahood. All these actions are solely for the welfare of living beings.

Therefore, all the teachings given by a buddha simply accomplish the welfare of living beings.

So, aren't we learning from Buddha now? Sure. Buddha, during his actual meditation process, divided it into three steps: beginning aspiration, in the middle accumulating merits, and in the end, actualizing perfect enlightenment. As for the aspiration, why do we need to have the aspiration? Aspire for what? This is the causal stage, or the "object" [as in object, application, and effect], how Buddha understood the object. In the middle, accumulating merits; which is followed by the "application" of the teaching in the beginning, and ending with the attainment of the "effect" stage.

[33A,02.42 (手抄稿 第五冊 p4 L7)]

All Buddhas want nothing other than to benefit all sentient beings; their only goal is to benefit living beings. Up to this point, some will feel, "Sigh, to benefit sentient beings in these days it is very difficult! I will solve my own problems first." Certainly, many have this thought. Some even say I want to learn from Buddha. However, subconsciously, the true motivation to benefit living beings is very weak. Needless to say, wanting to benefit all living beings, now when the monastic staff tells me to serve others, well, it seems easy when you think about it. If you are asked to do it, "Oh, that is very difficult! I would rather get it roughly done and take care of my own affairs first." It is not easy for us to generate a true intention to benefit living beings. This requires some elaboration here. For the sake of benefiting ourselves, you still have to benefit all living beings before we can

completely benefit ourselves. This concept will be discussed later in great detail.

[33A,03.45 (手抄稿 第五冊 p4 L14)]

Now we might as well briefly go over it here with short discussion. For instance, we all grew up from being children. For us as children in our families – we all have our own families. Some of course, have parents, even grandparents, and siblings. Some may not have all of these, however, everyone would have gone through a similar process. Now, let us use it as an example. For instance, usually, in a family, we often say there is a “head of the family.” This head of the family can be either the father or the mother. The head of the family has two types of conditions: one is that he or she provides the material support of the family as well as spiritual support. This is the head of the family. If he or she can perfect these two [material and spiritual support], naturally he or she is the head of the family.

[33A,04.43 (手抄稿 第五冊 p5 L7)]

So what is this situation? Well! The father works to earn a salary; he takes care of the family with the income. And then, he devotes his entire attention on the family, either through material or spiritual support. By doing so, naturally, everyone in the family relies on him. Oh! Because the father is working for our sake, when he comes home, you see that father looks after you. When we see father returns home, we are very happy. He

looks after you both materially and spiritually. The same goes for the wife, well, her husband works so hard out there and then comes home to comfort his wife. Well, when she sees her husband, she is pleased! This is one situation. On the contrary, if this husband makes money and squanders it on himself and has fun all by himself, then comes home to yell about this or that, and beats his wife and scolds his son. When they see him coming home – oh, today this king of hell is home, hurry up and hide far away. I believe we all can easily relate to this!

[33A,05.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p6 L1)]

Why mention this story? It tells us that, if you truly can be mindful of others, eventually for the sake of genuinely helping others, all those who have received benefits from you will wholeheartedly support you, isn't this right? Just like that example of the happy family. If you only care about yourself, even though you have a family, very sorry – it will be torn to pieces, a big mess. Isn't that right? Now when we engage in any karmic deeds, if you truly want to benefit yourself, very sorry, with just one person alone the benefit will not arise, that is how it works. When we are in a group, and you sincerely try to benefit the people around you, what you get in return from others usually will exceed what you have given, this you should carefully examine. Let's not talk about the future, let's look at the past. What is the purpose to achieve Buddhahood? That is to eradicate all previous karmic obstacles. How did all these karmic obstacles form? They arose from interpersonal relationships. Today, our karmic obstacles are never created on our own; can you purify your karmic

obstacles all by yourself? May I ask, can you do it alone? Isn't this concept very clear? So to completely eradicate our own karmic obstacles, you have to remove those links related to your karmic obstacles. For this, we don't need an in-depth discussion of benefiting others. We just need to motivate ourselves to genuinely benefit the self, which still needs to start by benefiting others!

[33A,07.21 (手抄稿 第五冊 p6 L11)]

Now, in our small circle of environment here, you look around, if this person is only mindful of his own business, you will naturally think, "This guy is so selfish!" You don't want to deal with him, but that is not possible. If he can truly think wholeheartedly for your sake, you naturally will also want to listen to him, and are willing to care for him, isn't this so? So may I ask, for those of us who want to study Buddha Dharma, would you like people to be disgusted by you or be willing to help you? Which one do you prefer? This is not just verbally; it isn't just to say, "achieving Buddhahood for the sake of living beings!" It has to be very explicit and very clear in your mind. You are mindful of this, very clear, very vividly reflecting on this task! I just bring it up in passing; the actual detailed discussion will follow later.

[33A,08.10 (手抄稿 第五冊 p7 L3)]

Thus, we understand the true marvel of the Buddha Dharma. Buddha, because he wanted to benefit all beings, eventually who receives the benefits, hey, how wonderful, he himself! How? All Buddhas, without

exception all have the aspiration. What aspiration? For all living beings to achieve Buddhahood. Yet, in the end, there are still immeasurable living beings, but he achieved Buddhahood, right? This is the most practical and extensive example. So for us to truly seek to benefit ourselves, we still need to start from benefiting others. On the contrary, for Arhats, well! They think that they have resolved their personal issues and, in the end, they attain their arhatship. Eventually, they still make a big circle to achieve Buddhahood, how unjustified! Now, we say, “Chanting Buddha’s name does not work this way, right?” Sorry! It works in the same way. Perhaps now your rebirth is to the Pure Land and to achieve arhatship. By then, you listen to Amitabha Buddha’s teaching of the *Lotus Sutra* and then turn around [to study the scriptures] in a big circle. All Buddhas’ paths are the same, so with this understanding of yours, we then will know this detour is pointless, an unnecessary detour! However, here we will not emphasize it now. If all of us do not want to take this path, next the text will provide more precise guidance. You want to benefit yourself now, and then all of the preceding preparations are required, and not it is meant for you to benefit yourself. Let’s continue.

[33A,09.37 (手抄稿 第五冊 p7 L14)]

This being the case, the welfare of living beings is what you should accomplish as well. This welfare is twofold: the provisional goal of high status as a human or deity, and the final goal of the certain goodness of liberation or omniscience.

So from our discussion above, in fact, our true understanding of benefiting self and others is, in fact, they are closely related. In other words, if you sincerely want to obtain this benefit, then what is the required content? The content mainly has two parts: first is “the provisional goal of high status” and the second is “the final goal of certain goodness.” This content we have already understood.

[33A,10.16 (手抄稿 第五冊 p8 L4)]

Between these two, many of the Buddha’s statements pertain to the attainment of the temporary goal of high status. All of these statements are included in the teachings for a person of genuine small capacity or the teachings shared with such a person,

Thus, for us to obtain the provisional goal, to accomplish, achieve, and attain the content of high status, these are all included in the category of “small scope,” also known as “shared small capacity.” Why is this small scope called shared small capacity? Because there are actually people who think, when asked to reach for Buddhahood, “Alas! To achieve Buddhahood is very hard; well, the immediate benefit is good enough!” Certainly, that is this type of person. However, for those who seriously want to become Buddha, they still need immediate benefit, so this part is shared. Up to this point, there is another concept we have to understand: noticing, how they sincerely want to become a Buddha. They will not only endure the suffering now but at the same time they are also

attaining the immediate provisional goal. Wouldn't that be hard for you to justify? Once you advance to high status, then stop right there, or even descend. Whereas he attains the provisional goal, advancing step by step, and he has this unceasing advancement, eventually attaining Buddhahood. So this concept we have to understand, the word "shared" has great meaning in it. To us, this shared part actually is a great encouragement! The teaching allows us to understand in every aspect: to merely seek immediate advantages is not worthwhile. If you can let it go and fully focus on seeking a greater goal, the immediate benefits will arise and the advantages at present time will appear.

[33A,11.51 (手抄稿 第五冊 p9 L1)]

because persons of special small capacity do not work very much on behalf of this lifetime, but they diligently strive for the excellent high states of human or divine rebirth in future lifetimes by engaging in the cultivation of their causes.

"Special small capacity" is truly important for us here. What is genuine special small capacity? Actually, this is also what this section is trying to teach us. If you do not understand this special small capacity, the aforementioned small scope becomes the plight of three lifetimes. You sacrifice great things for a small advantage. For the special small scope, attainment is stepwise. This special small scope does not emphasize the present life, but what are these practitioners seeking? They are seeking "excellent high states in future lifetimes." Because one seeks excellence in future

rebirths, so what kind of cause does one's current engagement accumulate? All the causes are directed toward a fortunate rebirth. Because one wants to plant benefits for future rebirths, so one practice. By engaging in many virtuous deeds, one's rebirth will be favorable in the future.

[33A,12.59 (手抄稿 第五冊 p9 L8)]

As for us now, we have forsaken all advantages in society and become ordained, why? It is not for present attachments, well, we feel, "Pure Land is wonderful! I don't want any of these worldly things." You just strive on this! Actually, it is definitely true, well, if you can endure hardship at the present moment and pay a small price now, putting numbers to this investment, maybe it is \$80,000-\$100,000, the future return, wow, will be immeasurable! Wang-yong-qing [a billionaire in Taiwan] cannot even measure up does he even count? Alas! We don't want to be like him, that is how it goes. So what is this called? It is a special small capacity; this is also what the Lamrim is trying to teach us.

[33A,13.47 (手抄稿 第五冊 p9 L14)]

The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment:

**Know to be "least" those persons
Who diligently strive to attain
Solely the joys of cyclic existence
By any means for their welfare alone.**

Next is the quote from the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. It is the blueprint for Lamrim, by Venerable Atisha. In fact, the author [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] cites from it for a specific reason – to reveal the complete lineage of the teaching. Up to here, does everyone still remember! What is the genuine greatness of this Lamrim? Buddha passed his teachings to two great Bodhisattvas – one was Bodhisattva Maitreya, the other was Bodhisattva Manjusri. The unbroken lineage passed to Bodhisattva Nagarjuna, Asanga, and then continuously onto Venerable Atisha, this was the complete lineage. So here the author specifically clarifies, “I am not making it up, the essence of Buddha’s teaching is based on this!” This quote should be easy to understand. If we are busy with the methods of finding happiness in the midst of cyclic existence, then it is considered small capacity. The above explained this – if you seek high-status, then it is small capacity. There is another benefit to strive for, which is certain-goodness:

[33A,15.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p10 L8)]

There are two kinds of certain goodness: the liberation that is mere freedom from cyclic existence and the sublime state of omniscience.

To attain ultimate “certain goodness” has two benefits: one is for personal liberation alone and this is known the Theravada. And the other one is “sublime state of omniscience,” which is Buddhahood.

[33A,15.25 (手抄稿 第五冊 p10 L11)]

Many of the Buddha's statements pertain to the vehicles of the *pratyekabuddha* and the *sravaka*. All of these statements are included in the teachings for a person of actual medium capacity or the teachings shared with such a person,

Between the two types, regardless of whether it is “sravaka” or “pratyekabuddha,” their contents are covered in the middle capacity – perhaps “medium scope” or “shared middle capacity.” The meaning of “shared” is the same as above. So here we need to focus on this “shared,” for those who only take the path of middle scope, it is not worthwhile because, when you get to the great scope, you will attain this [medium scope effect] as well. If you don't take great capacity and only attain [medium scope], you will not advance further. Thus, we should recognize the meaning of this word “shared.” So what is the content of medium capacity?

[33A,16.14 (手抄稿 第五冊 p11 L3)]

because persons of medium capacity develop disenchantment with all of cyclic existence, and then make their goal their own liberation from cyclic existence. They then enter the path of the three trainings, the method for attaining liberation.

The content [of medium capacity] is to develop renunciation. We usually only refer to renunciation as disenchantment, and it is to be disenchanted about what? It is to be disenchanted with “all cyclic existence,” which includes all three realms [desire, form, and

formless realms] of existence. Hence, the desire realm can be very loathsome, why? It has all sorts of disadvantages. Even in the form and formless realms – in the form realm, deities have too much enjoyment; in the formless realm ... one should recognize all the disadvantages and generate great disenchantment. However, that disenchantment is for the sake of individual benefit, to wholeheartedly achieve personal liberation to escape from the three realms. Thus, for the sake of escaping from the three realms, one seeks an expedient approach. What is this expedient approach? It is ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom [the three precious trainings]. These are all included in medium capacity.

[33A,17.24 (手抄稿 第五冊 p11 L11)]

Here, in passing, I will bring up this minor note: if a person with genuine medium capacity attains serenity, let's not belittle such concentration. If it is compared with worldly enjoyment, such meditative achievement is much better off. Why do I mention this? Now for our practice, often we have a little bit of understanding, wow, we are overjoyed! And after a few chants of Buddha's name, ah! We think that we have some attainment. And with a few prostrations to Buddha, one feels very good about it! In addition, one feels so nice about a dream or feels very comfortable in a meditation posture – everyone feels that this is good and stops advancing. Once you feel good about it, you will stop advancing, this we have to recognize. Thus, for the content of Buddha Dharma, if you don't have accurate recognition,

of course, you may have some good developments, but you would stagnate there and unable to advance.

[33A,18.12 (手抄稿 第五冊 p12 L4)]

In fact, such state of mind is far from the state of concentration. When you chant Buddha's name up to one-pointedness, you have not entered the domain of the desire realm's meditative equipoise [v.2 p.230]. By the time you achieve Samadhi of chanting Buddha's name that is when you achieve concordance with the concentration of the form realm. Of course, chanting Buddha's name will ensure your progress toward the goal. However, once you have attained the Samadhi of chanting Buddha's name, the practitioner would no longer form attachment because his actual goal is not attached to the joy in the form realm, he is headed toward Pure Land. Thus, rebirth in Pure Land relies on faith and aspiration – it relies on aspiration, not concentration. So if we don't recognize this point now, instead we learn a little, well, then we cling to it! Very sorry, that is very dangerous, it is extremely dangerous. I just mention it in passing. Next, it also quotes from *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*.

[33A,19.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p12 L11)]

English LR v.1 p.130-131

The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment:

**Those persons are called “medium”
Who stop sinful actions,**

**Turn their backs on the joys of cyclic existence,
And diligently strive just for their own peace.**

So, now the medium scope practitioners turn their backs on all sorts of happiness in the three realms of existence, like this. So a true practitioner of the Theravada vehicle, regardless of what kind of happiness you offer to him, he will definitely reject it, absolutely turn away from it, and this is the characteristic. Furthermore, because he is mindfully pursuing this path of meditation, in this situation, his attitude would prevent sinful actions. This sinful action is a level higher than the virtue and non-virtue that we know of right now! The virtuous and non-virtuous actions we base on are the standard of three fortunate realms and three miserable realms. That is to say, descent to the miserable realms is considered bad karma. Now for the virtue of the Theravada practitioners is to be liberated from cyclic existence and, if one is submerged in cyclic existence, it is considered a nonvirtuous action. So the three phrases in the short version of ethical discipline, to “purify one’s mind” is the standard guideline. If you engage in many kind deeds, yet are attached to them and won’t let go, this is a nonvirtuous act. So what is most important here? To “diligently strive just for their own peace” – those seeking individual peacefulness are still considered medium capacity.

[33A,20.36 (手抄稿 第五冊 p13 L7)]

English LR v.1 p.131

The Elder’s [Atisha’s] *Lamp for the Collection of Deeds* states:

**Since the guru, the Buddha, said,
“Depend on the perfection and mantra vehicles
And attain enlightenment,”
Here I will write about the meaning of this.**

Thus, the “elder” is Venerable Atisha, who composed the *Lamp for the Collection of Deeds*. The quote says, “the guru, the Buddha, said.” It refers to the guru in front of me. Actually, it refers to the essence passed down from the Buddhas of all ten directions. What is it? It is to thoroughly solve all problems [in cyclic existence]; and to perfect one’s Bodhichitta, which are of two parts, what are the two? One is the perfection vehicle; the other is the mantra vehicle. The mantra vehicle practices “mantra,” and the perfection vehicle is to “cross to the other shore.” Now, this Lamrim guides us with teachings from both vehicles. So now Lama Tsong-kha-pa explains this concept by “[writing] about the meaning of this.” This refers to the aforementioned contents and lineage of the three types of persons.

[33A,21.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p14 L1)]

According to this, the method of attaining omniscience is twofold: the Mahayana of the perfections and the Mahayana of mantra.

Actual practice to achieve omniscience on the Buddha path has two approaches: the perfection vehicle and the mantra vehicle.

[33A,21.53 (手抄稿 第五冊 p14 L3)]

These two are included in the teachings of a person of great capacity

These two are completely included in a person of great capacity.

[33A,21.59 (手抄稿 第五冊 p14 L5)]

because persons of great capacity, under the influence of great compassion, make buddhahood their goal in order to extinguish all the sufferings of all living beings. They then train in the six perfections, the two stages, and the like.

So what is great capacity? It's when one is "under the influence of great compassion." What is influencing us now? We are under the influence of afflictions. After cultivating, the arising influence in our mind will become great compassion – mindfulness of others – like that. Thus... for you to help others, that requires the proper method. Without the proper method, the help will not work. For instance, at home, a mother is the kindest person. However, she may not be able to educate her child properly. All mothers, without exception, wish that their children could have a bright future. However, after trying hard for a while, well! It just won't work, why? For they spoil their children. So we say that lacking a proper method, compassion will not work. So there is a common expression, "affectionate view of compassion yet short of wisdom." Once you have this compassionate

attitude, if you don't have actual attainment of the wisdom of emptiness – understanding true reality and corresponding to it – then you are still in the midst of affection influenced by affliction. Bodhisattvas cannot have such an erroneous view!

[33A,23.23 (手抄稿 第五冊 p15 L1)]

So once you have great compassion, since all sentient beings need to be helped, you still need to have the method to relief them all. So what should we do? By then, one needs to realize that we must achieve Buddhahood, so the development of Bodhichitta is said to be aspired to become Buddha for the sake of all beings. So there are several requirements, it is said that Bodhichitta requires great compassion, great wisdom, and great deeds. If you do not have compassion, then you would not have the intention to help others. If you have compassion but you lack wisdom, then the help is not possible. Once you truly have wisdom, when you begin to practice the teachings then that will be correct. Upon perfecting the practice, then it is called great deeds. That is it! So, to truly achieve it, what study is required? There are two things to learn, the “six perfections and two stages” or just six perfections. Or you can include the two stages on top of the six perfections. The two stages were discussed before: the stage of generation and the stage of completion, both of them are in the mantra teachings.

[33A,24.21 (手抄稿 第五冊 p15 L8)]

The *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*:

**Those persons are called “superior”
Who sincerely want to extinguish
All the sufferings of others
By understanding their own suffering.**

The great scope still says, understand personal suffering and then extend that experience to others so to assist them. Moreover, one needs to eradicate all living beings' suffering in the Dharma Realm. This is the most superior person and this is the Bodhisattva with great Bodhichitta.

[33A,24.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p15 L11)]

Below, I will explain how the method for these persons to attain enlightenment involves both the perfection and mantra vehicles.

This content is for the study of the great capacity; this is the topic of this section so the text will explain it in great detail. Great! Based on the above content, let's take a look at the overall content of Buddhism that is completely included here. So Master Tai-xu of our time spoke of the five vehicles of humans and deities [plus sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva to make up as the five vehicles]. Actually, these five come from reliable sources, which are clearly described in Indian scriptures. One can further group them into five vehicles, three vehicles, or even two vehicles. In the end, even in the *Lotus Sutra*, there is only one vehicle that is to

achieve Buddhahood. Regardless of how you group them, the content is completely covered in this section. There is no exception: all the objects for you to practice in this training are nothing else but these.

[33A,25.37 (手抄稿 第五冊 p16 L3)]

Humans and deities, of course, are in cyclic existence. No one wants to be in a hell realm, no one wants to become an animal. Everyone wants enjoyment, thus enjoyment can be found in human and deity. These are all included in the small capacity teaching. If you abide by small capacity practice, you will be reborn in human or deity realms. However, human and deity realms are still not perfect. After cycling through the plight of three lifetimes, you might descend again, alas! One still needs to be free from cyclic existence. Those who escape individually are called sravakas and pratyekabuddhas – shared medium capacity. Even these practitioners who want to escape cyclic existence, “I claim that I want to be a worldly good person, and the qualification is to care for others and help others.” Now as a Buddhist, surprisingly enough, one achieves personal liberation and forsakes others, what is this? For instance, those worldly nice people always helping others – namely: parents, spouses, children, relatives, and friends. Yet, now as a Buddhist, you care for no one but yourself and your own study. Well, no, no, you need to reach out to others and to be qualified as a great capacity practitioner. So these concepts are all included here.

[33A,26.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p16 L11)]

Up to this point, I also remember one thing. Back in those days, my teacher often scolded me. Sigh, I am truly grateful now, I can't thank him enough! I might as well share the lecture from my teacher here: at that time, I often thought that I was a practitioner, always felt that I don't want to do this, don't want to do that, I am here to meditate in the monastery. And I always thought that I gave up everything to come here to meditate! My teacher said: "You meditate! If you want to meditate and be locked up in the mountain retreat, why do you come here for room and board from me? Am I indebted to you?" I heard that and, at that time, my thought was, why are people here not compassionate? "Love and compassion! Aren't you here to learn from Buddha? You need compassion, yet I am just such an ordinary being!" At that time, I could not understand, just couldn't comprehend it. Now, I have gradually recognized it.

[33A,27.35 (手抄稿 第五冊 p17 L3)]

Certainly, we feel "I want to meditate!" Well, while cultivating, whom are you cultivating? You are cultivating yourself. If you have to improve yourself, why do you come to my place and eat my food? This is absolutely true! Moreover, I took it for granted to eat monastic food. Such as, after all the monastics finish their work, they have to take care of you. Why do they forsake their own meditation and come to help you? I contemplated it for a while: that is right! If I only care about myself, meditation retreat is the right thing to do! If everyone just minds

one's own business, why should I cook for you? Why should I do it for you? So everyone... well, they have to go for alms rounds, beg for food to eat then meditate. If they went begging and didn't get food then they just have to starve, and that was only fair! After all, you just have to care for yourself. Today, I claim to free all beings from their cyclic existence problems, however, the problem was not solved. Yet others had to serve me and, when the service was not satisfying, I would blame others! The more I thought about it, the more it did not sound right! Maybe I misunderstood meditation in the monastery from the very beginning. Certainly, in the beginning, it started this way. However, I have already gotten it wrong at the causal stage, my goodness! Alas, later I gradually understood this lecture, slowly comprehended the intended meaning in it!

[33A,28.43 (手抄稿 第五冊 p17 L13)]

So now when I notice others busily occupied in monastic chores, I am truly grateful! I absolutely will not think: alas, those people do not know how to meditate. This is wrong, fortunately, he is taking care of that matter, so today I can practice here with a clear conscience. I am truly grateful! If there is free time, I would certainly help him out, and we work together to make it happen. Actually, such deeds are to my advantage, now I gradually have this understanding. Once you have this understanding, the mentality to blame others will decrease gradually, and eventually, it reduces to negligible levels, until, at the very end, the sense of unfairness has totally disappeared. By then, advancement is more or less possible. Thus, now I feel

sometimes scolding is necessary! I have thought about this for a long time. Later, he scolded me several times, while I was being scolded, my mind was rejecting it: “Alas, what is the matter with the teacher? How can he react this way?” But how wonderful it was! If you cannot correspond to the teaching, you would always pause at that thought, and this lecture would never have an effect.

[33B,00.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p19 L1)]

At that time, fortunately, I gradually knew how to introspect from time to time, so I thought that I might as well reflect on what he said. Upon contemplation! I thought it made sense; it is so true, absolutely true! Nowadays, let’s just say that you aspire to practice the teaching, would you mind sparing some time to help others? No, you don’t want to! Then why should others come to help you? Why? May I ask, have you thought about this or ever reflected on it? This is a very simple question. Practitioners should be worldly people with a sense of morality, right! Is your selfishness considered moral? Does it count as morality? Well, so I believe... does not matter what you were thinking, upon more reflection the more embarrassment would arise. Thus, let me tell you, in the past, my eyes were arrogantly up here, on top of my head. Why? Gradually, on one hand, I listened to this reasoning often enough, but on the other hand, I have been scolded. There are benefits to being scolded! More or less I am willing to introspect. So those of you here today, if you are willing to listen to me, I want to tell you that introspection is very important. Once you can introspect, then the situation for your

practice is different. Gradually my eyes lower to here, then to here. Why are they here? Because I am afraid to look at others, definitely don't dare to look! By reflecting on it later, alas, you would sense that arrogance is totally meritless! There isn't enough time for you to confess everything with all your might, and you feel embarrassed when facing others. This feeling is absolutely true! That is how it works.

[33B,01.36 (手抄稿 第五冊 p20 L3)]

So up to this point, I might as well share one of my experiences. By that time, regardless of whether you claim to act for the benefit of self or others, you won't have any tiny chance to get upset and be disagreeable. It will all disappear! When you notice how disagreeable you are, who benefits from it? It works like a charm the benefit is yours! The benefit is truly yours! This was mentioned earlier, right? When you generate any bit of anger in front of a Bodhisattva, that is the harm you impose on yourself. There are times, when you face a given condition, you would be agreeable and it is not possible for you to get upset. Why do you have this state of mind of not getting upset? It is the suppleness quality! It becomes very easy for you to be patient, and in the end, the benefit is yours, very interesting! Do you believe it? Well, that is how it works! If you don't believe it, give it a try. My concern is that you won't try it. Thus this is mentioned in passing; next, it covers the three scopes.

[33B,02.30 (手抄稿 第五冊 p20 L10)]

With respect to the terms for the three types of persons, these statements in the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* are similar in meaning to the statement in the *Compendium of Determinations of the Levels of Yogic Deeds*:

Furthermore, there are the three types of persons as follows. There are those who have correctly assumed the vow of ethical discipline of giving up the ten nonvirtues, which is not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow. There are those who have correctly assumed the *sravaka's* vow of ethical discipline. There are those who have correctly assumed the bodhisattva's vow of ethical discipline. Among these, the first are the least; the second, medium; and the third, superior.

Why does the author need to specify this? I will explain it here. Because, in the beginning when we talk about the general presentation of the path, it says that the three types of persons include everything. Well, however, now in this *Levels of Yogic Deeds* – the *Compendium of Determinations* also establishes the term of three types of persons. Is the content of these three types of persons different? Thus, here we need to distinguish them.

[33B,03.15 (手抄稿 第五冊 p21 L2)]

Why does the text say it in this way? If we just go with our usual way of reading the text, you will not be able to see why it is presented in this manner. Remember I mentioned to you the day before yesterday, a perfect teaching will arrange what we should study very clear beforehand, and we must discern it explicitly and clearly without any omission. If you leave anything out, you will feel that you're doing it right, but then something goes wrong halfway through. Well, have to go back to when you were making your initial decision, in other words, when you were learning in the first place, this aspect was overlooked. At that time, your study has gone wrong and you will be out of options, is that right? So here all aspects are covered. Now, for the three types of persons, regardless of whether it is Profound View or Extensive Deeds, either school does not have any exception – all aspects must be properly prepared beforehand. While advancing, your progress will be very steady! This is the importance of the general presentation of the path, is this clear? Later I will tell you when we are discussing the practice of the six perfections, etc. You can also read them on your own for now before we discuss it. However, if I don't explain it here, you would definitely not notice it in the text – we need to understand this big loophole.

[33B,04.28 (手抄稿 第五冊 p21 L12)]

So what is the above text about? It says the “three types of persons” are “those who have correctly

assumed the vow of ethical discipline of giving up the ten nonvirtues, which is not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow.” What is not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow? Let me tell you, this refers to our average good deeds, general kind actions. This is the first one.

[33B,04.51 (手抄稿 第五冊 p21 L15)]

On [page 131] of the text, with regards to the term of the three types of persons, so why does the author bring it up this way? For sometimes the same term carries different meanings. So under these circumstances, some meanings may have been overlooked. If there is an omission, then it will not be perfect, it is incomplete. Therefore, all perfect, purified teachings will definitely distinguish the concept very clearly in the beginning. We should recognize and understand this. In the future, if you want to advance, you may think of yourself as a mighty one – truly a powerful person of character – so at that time you decide to take this most accurate and complete path. By then, every detail regarding this complete teaching becomes very important, very crucial! This is why, in such complete teachings, they all start with discernment. For instance, in the *Levels of Yogic Deeds*, at first it is arranged with the *Main Stages Division*, and immediately followed by the *Compendium of Determinations*, in order to distinguish such differences, or even explain it in great detail, nevertheless the entire “path” should be covered without any omission so not to leave anything out. If you have such recognition, then your advance will be very stable and steady! If you have

any oversight after getting halfway, then you will have to start over again. Sigh, and that would absolutely be a great waste!

[33B,07.17 (手抄稿 第五冊 p22 L11)]

Then now the author says that these three types of persons are also in the *Compendium of Determinations of the Levels of Yogic Deeds*. And the author cites, “Furthermore, there are the three types of persons as follows. There are those who have correctly assumed the vow of ethical discipline of giving up the ten nonvirtues, which is not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow. There are those who have correctly assumed the sravaka’s vow of ethical discipline. There are those who have correctly assumed the Bodhisattva’s vow of ethical discipline. Among these, the first are the least; the second, medium; and the third, superior.” These terms of the three types of persons may seem different from the above-mentioned three types of persons. Actually, the content is the same, identical.

[33B,08.04 (手抄稿 第五冊 p23 L1)]

So here, regarding “not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow,” I will briefly explain it. Generally, vows refer to precepts. Then why are they called vows? Why do we say, “there are those who have correctly assumed the vow of ethical discipline of giving up the ten nonvirtues, which is not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow”? This vow is referring to ethical discipline in general, which will lead to the most virtuous

level of kind deeds. In other words, this will bring about the purest virtuous effect, the best virtuous effect. And the other one, referred to as not a vow yet is similar to a vow, will lead to the worst nonvirtuous effect. So the most virtuous effect will promote you to the deity realm or at least allow you to maintain a human form. If we dedicate these merits so we can reach Pure Land, then we are certain to be reborn there, and this is due to precepts. Once you truly attain this essence of the precepts, as long as you abide by it, then you are certain to be reborn in Pure Land.

[33B,09.16 (手抄稿 第五冊 p23 L8)]

So those that are not a vow certainly lead to downfall. What is not a vow? We call it erroneous vows, we may not be very clear with this concept, and it will be briefly mentioned here. Usually, there are two or three types of situations that we talk about: the first is your family background. For instance, your birth family – we may not have castes here. In India, the clans passed down in their traditions, for example, they have Brahmins, Ksatriyas, Chandalas, or butchers who slaughter pigs and goats. Their professions were inherited from their ancestors, they just follow suit, like that. So, in other words, this is a specific profession of slaughtering pigs and goats, therefore the concept of butchering was planted at a very young age. Actually, we still have this type of profession over here. Like many non-Buddhists are doing it. When I was in India, I heard this once: one of the religions was teaching the concept of killing people. The way they kill is not like a bandit – first, they would show a friendly appearance. Once they

saw a stranger, they would help you with great friendliness and gain your trust. And then they will take you somewhere, a few people would surround you to kill you and take away all your belongings. Because it was a religion, so even the government could not do anything about it. This is still happening now! This force of the religion is an erroneous vow; this is one type.

[33B,10.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p24 L4)]

The other type, it is because we are influenced by the present erroneous worldly perceptions, incorrect perception. For instance, we now say many animals are born so that they can be eaten by us. Thus, you rely on this concept – and usually, we have these erroneous and inverted concepts, and we rely on such concepts to engage in this or that. Let's use an example! During the Song dynasty, there was a famous group of people – the gang of Liang-shan-bo and Song-jiang. They were not claiming, "Here I am the bandit." What did they announce that they were doing? It was "the enforcement of justice on behalf of heaven." They were actually... and then, doing chivalrous acts in the communities, and they felt proud of it! What did they specialize in? They specialized in chivalry. Could you think of him as worthless? Well, he seemed to have sound reasoning! Could he be thought of as reasonable? Then, if everyone were like that, the government would be out of discipline. This is the type of person, people like that who was influenced by this concept, then, thus, he abides by it. So in this situation, this is an erroneous vow.

[33B,12.00 (手抄稿 第五冊 p24 L13)]

There is another kind, whether it is good or bad, here we only focus on the good. That is to say, he is not specifically endowed with these virtuous precepts, but it is about, for instance, from the world sense we think that doing it this way is very good! The majority of people have this sense of worldly moral integrity and standard that should be followed. So usually, we speak of virtuous precepts and intrinsically kind nature – with the classification of an intrinsically kind nature, some will sincerely follow it. Or even with the virtuous precepts, these precepts may not have strong correspondence with spirituality, so this is not considered a vow and yet is similar to a vow. For example, in the mundane world, we talk about benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, intellect, and trust, or even taking the five precepts. These five precepts have two types: if you observe them for the sake of spirituality, these five precepts are the minimum foundation of pure ethical discipline. If we lack the understanding of such characteristic and randomly take them, actually we won't get the true content. In this circumstance, taking the vows is good, but in reality, it is not enough, it has such meaning in it.

[33B,13.19 (手抄稿 第五冊 p25 L7)]

Thus what does this explain? The first type is to obtain the effect of being reborn in human and deity realms, like that. For the second type, it has to be the supramundane, conforming to the sravaka mentality. The third type is taking the Mahayana Bodhisattva path.

These three types of persons may have different terms, but the contents are the same.

[33B,13.39 (手抄稿 第五冊 p25 L10)]

Furthermore, the scriptures mention many ways of positing a least, a medium, and a superior person.

It establishes all sorts of approaches. Next, it says:

[33B,13.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p25 L12)]

English LR v.1 p.131-132

Like Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kosa Auto-commentary* defines the three types of persons. Among the persons of small capacity, there are indeed two types—those who are intent on this lifetime and those who are intent on future lifetimes. However, here I am speaking of the latter, whom I will identify as those who engage in the unmistakable method for attaining high status.

Now I will explain it, other than this *Compendium of Determinations*, which is part of the *Levels of Yogic Deeds*, as well as in other sources. Even in this *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, there is a quote from Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharma*, which also defined the three types of persons. Regardless of what source it is, in summary, the three types of persons we refer to here are already included in all of Buddha's teachings. All of

Buddha's teachings also include everything in the ten Dharma Dhatus without any omission, just like that.

[33B,14.42 (手抄稿 第五冊 p26 L4)]

So next is a specific explanation, this explanation is what we should sincerely recognize in the very beginning. This should be our first step. There are two types of persons of small capacity. What is the characteristic of a small capacity? It is to seek “high status,” which is improving our living conditions in the mundane world – that is the meaning. However, the gradual improvements here are divided into two parts: one of them is within the present lifetime – seeking improvement in this life. The other is seeking a better future rebirth. Here the actual guidance for us is “the second one” – seeking future rebirth. The last statement, pay attention! It is the intent for future rebirths, which still require to “engage in the unmistakable method for attaining high status.” While your intention on the future rebirth has to be accurate, too! What will be the consequence if it is mistaken? The attainment of the next rebirth will not extend to the life after it – one would end up with the plight of three lifetimes! This is very important, very crucial! If you are confident on this point, the infallible and unmistakable high status allows you to constantly advancing, constantly improving – one will never downfall. What is the end of high status? One would become enlightened both physically and mentally.

[33B,15.55 (手抄稿 第五冊 p26 L12)]

The actual supremacy of Buddha Dharma is not for you to give up whatever you have now, not like that. Later, the text will explain it in great detail. We actually rely on these immediate substances. However, many paradoxical objects could be harmful! Well, you have some pleasant experience, but, upon being drawn in with a taste of it, it will immediately cost you your life, just like that. So the real brilliance of Buddha Dharma is it defines every aspect explicitly. The reason that we are infatuated and fallible is due to a lack of understanding of the true nature of reality. In other words, we are not endowed with wisdom. Now, we often mistaken what's wrong to be right, and that is harmful! Regarding what unmistakable high status is, the text will reveal it to us in a very precise manner in the small capacity section. As for now, this is the first point, before we start to understand the entirety of the Buddha Dharma path, the contents are nothing else but these. Thus, now we have this understanding. Hence, on this path, why does one need to follow the teachings of this Lamrim from small, medium and to great capacities? Now the text will explain.

[33B,17.21 (手抄稿 第五冊 p27 L6)]

English LR v.1 p.132

2) Why students are led in stages using the trainings of the three types of persons

This explanation has two parts:

- 1. The purpose of leading students by means of the paths of the three types of persons**
- 2. Why one guides students through such stages**

So the second explains why we need to follow this stage for guidance, which is also divided into two parts.

[33B,17.38 (手抄稿 第五冊 p27 L8)]

a) The purpose of leading students by means of the paths of the three types of persons

First, it explains the contents of this “leading students by means of the paths of the three types of persons.” What the guidance of the three types of persons is, that is it. And secondly, the text further explains again, why we need this stage for guidance. The first part specifies what the content of the three types of persons is; the second part is why it guides us in this manner. Based on this, the entire content will become very clear for us, very explicit, very clear!

[33B,18.20 (手抄稿 第五冊 p28 L1)]

I have given an explanation of the three types of persons. However, the stages of the path for the person of great capacity also include the paths for the other two types of persons in their entirety. Thus, these two paths are parts, or branches, of the Mahayana path.

Even though the above states the three types of persons, but truthfully speaking, the great capacity also includes the content of both small and medium capacities without any omission, leaving none of them out. It is like building a house. If what I am now building is 100 stories. Although it is 100 stories, the foundational stories are all included one by one, and they have to be completely fulfilled. So with this, what are the supporting small capacity and medium capacity? They are part of the Mahayana path – they are branches of Mahayana. So the text states, “Thus, these two paths are parts, or branches, of the Mahayana path.” Part and branch have the same meaning; which are the subdivisions.

[33B,19.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p28 L8)]

As the master Asvaghosa states in his *Cultivation of the Conventional Spirit of Enlightenment*:

**Being harmless, truthful,
And chaste; not stealing,
And giving away all your possessions:
These are deeds that give rise to happy rebirths.**

Next, it quotes from a commentary. In this commentary, it tells us, the first one is “being harmless,” which is no killing. Instead of using “no killing,” it says being harmless, which has a broader definition. Usually, we only refer to killing. Strictly speaking, it is not to harm others, not to hurt anyone. The most serious harm is killing. With this transgression, it will be hard for you to repent. If from a subtler perspective, needless to say for killing, even harming is not permitted, or even making

others feel slightly hurt. Thus, usually the guide of the precepts is for us to be constantly mindful not harming others through acts of the body, speech, and mind. Body and speech are to harm us physically and verbally, and mental intention makes others feel discomfort and uneasy. Instead, we should not offend others.

[33B,20.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p29 L3)]

However, we find out in many aspects, why is it that Buddha sometimes berated others? We have to understand: what does it mean by harming or not harming others? It refers to the ultimate intention. The reason Buddha berated others is actually to help them. For Buddha was totally endowed with compassion, he knew that doing so was for your benefit. It is like parents, well, the child is ignorant, so in this situation, leaving the child to be ignorant about something is to harm him. Thus, the parents berate the child not to engage in it! Thus, Buddha would neither berate without any reason nor would he berate the irrelevant ones. He only berated his disciples, his followers. For this, we have to understand the characteristic of Buddha's precepts. And later, for instance, when things happen in the monastery, the same guideline applies. There are requirements for the senior monks to berate others – what must his mentality be based? He has to base it on kindness – kindness is compassion, sympathy, and is ethically neutral. For the sake of maintaining the monastics, maintaining the Sangha community, that's when you can berate them. It is not for us to have a vicious intention. Thus, this “being harmless” has a broader sense. In fact, with this harmless mentality, then

stepwise gradual advancement becomes possible. Being “truthful,” this we understand. “Stealing” and “chaste” – these are refraining from killing, senseless speech, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

[33B,22.15 (手抄稿 第五冊 p29 L13)]

“And giving away all your possessions: these are deeds that give rise to happy rebirths.” The last part of this verse is about giving away all your possessions. It actually also applies to the precept of intoxication. What is the precept of intoxication for? The grasping part will invert our normal behavior and cause us to become disoriented [by overly depending on certain external substances]. To give away all possessions is, well, [to give away our reliance on external substance] is the right thing to do. So we should understand that Venerable Asvaghosa did not refer to the exact term of the five precepts but he used these five expressions in this verse, such intention is very profound – the fundamental essence to truthfully abide by the Buddhists precepts is all imbedded within these five expressions. Regardless whether it is 250 precepts or over 300 precepts, by capturing these subtle expressions, then all 250 monastic vows are included. So, from here, what does abiding by precept means? It directs to “deeds that give rise to happy rebirths.” Because you get hold of this content [of not be attached], which is the foundation; and then enhance it with the subtler aspects, this is the high-status.

[33B,23.12 (手抄稿 第五冊 p30 L5)]

**Once you have seen the suffering of cyclic existence,
You cultivate the true path to abandon it,
And you eliminate the two misdeeds;
These are the deeds that give rise to peace.**

Furthermore, although you obtain the rebirth in a fortunate realm, yet it is still not thorough – fortunate realms are still within cyclic existence. So, one step further, to analyze it more: that the miserable realms are dreadful, but fortunate realms are still amid in cyclic existence. Suffering remains. Well, that is not going to work! One has to abandon it – for the sake of completely escaping cyclic existence, then it requires one to meditate on the corresponding “path to cessation,” the unmistakable true path. Moreover, one needs to “eliminate” the two kinds of misdeeds – deeds wrong by nature and deeds wrong by prohibition. Of course, there are different discerning guidelines, in other words, this covers all conditions. These are the “deeds give rise to peace”, which leads to liberation from the cyclic existence, to transcend rebirth, and this is the medium capacity.

[33B,24.13 (手抄稿 第五冊 p30 L12)]

**A person of great capacity should practice all these;
They are the branches of the path of the supreme determination to be free.
The knowledge that all phenomena are emptinesses**

Creates the stream of compassion for all beings.

Limitless deeds of skill-in-means

Are the activity of the supreme determination to be free.

Moreover, take one more step further to the great capacity. Even though it is great capacity, the preceding capacities must also be cultivated! So it says, “A person of great capacity should practice all these; they are the branches of the path of the supreme determination to be free,” which is to apply both of the shared small and shared medium capacities as well. Besides, “the knowledge that all phenomena are emptinesses” followed by “creates the stream of compassion for all beings” so you are compassionate toward all living beings. In this situation, there are immeasurable six perfections of Bodhisattva deeds to solve all living beings’ sufferings. That is considered the supreme act of disenchantment. So what is the difference between Mahayana and Theravada? They both have disenchantment. One is for individual renouncement, the other is to renounce together with all living beings in the Dharma Dhatu. So it says:

[33B,25.26 (手抄稿 第五冊 p31 L5)]

English LR v.1 p.132-133

Therefore, in this instance teachers lead you neither to the path for persons of small capacity, who make their goal the mere happiness of cyclic existence, nor to the path for persons of medium capacity, who make their goal the mere liberation from cyclic

existence for their own sake. Rather, they take some of the paths that are common to these two types of persons and make them prerequisites for leading you to the path for persons of great capacity. Thus they make them components of the training in the path for person of great capacity.

So from here, we recognize that Venerable Asvaghosa explicitly expressed in the preceding deeds that give rise to virtuous rebirth, and the second is deeds that give rise to peace and disenchantment. So what about cultivating great capacity? The practitioner still needs both of the above foundations as part of the branches of the Mahayana path, and then further advance to the goal of acting with “supreme disenchantment” and helping all living beings in the Dharma Dhatu to be free from the suffering of cyclic existence. So this is not merely talking about small capacity, not merely allowing you to achieve small capacity with the attainment of a rebirth as a human or deity. The medium capacity covered here is not merely for your own advancement toward liberation. It is rather to apply the preceding two shared paths as the foundation for great capacity, as a step-by-step guide, this we have to understand. Thus, what is the true purpose of using the guidance for the three types of persons, why do we do that? What is the purpose? It is still to guide us to achieve the most laudable act of disenchantment, to resolve all problems. It can resolve all problems, and completely achieve all good qualities. This is the purpose.

[33B,27.22 (手抄稿 第五冊 p32 L1)]

English LR v.1 p.133

Therefore, once you have developed the desire to take full advantage of the human life of leisure and opportunity as explained before, you must know how to take full advantage of it. With respect to that, Bhavaviveka's *Heart of the Middle Way* states:

These bodies are insubstantial,
Like banana trees and bubbles.
Who would not give them a substance that is
like Mount Meru
By making them conditions for helping others?

These bodies are a basis for sickness, old age,
and death.
Those who have good character and
compassion
Make them in each moment
A basis for promoting happiness in others.

This life of leisure is free of the eight conditions
of nonleisure.
With the lamp of the sublime teaching
Make good use of this leisure
Through the deed of a person of great capacity.

Next is the explanation, I will read it as well and briefly go over it.

[33B,27.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p32 L5)]

Thus, enter the Mahayana with the thought, “Day and night I will conduct myself as a person of great capacity, making good use of the body of mine, which is a home of illness, a basis for the sufferings of old age and the like, and which lacks an essence like a banana tree or a water bubble.”

So for those of us who truly want to study and practice Buddha Dharma, who want to attain the essence of mind training, what is this aspiration for virtue? It is taught in the quote from the *Heart of the Middle Way*. In this quote, it explains that we should contemplate in this way: our body “lacks essence,” it is intangible and it is hollow. It changes very quickly and is as impermanent as a banana tree. What is a banana tree? In general, it looks like a tree, but if you open up the trunk, you will find that within the layers inside, it is empty. It appears to be solid on the outside, yet inside it is not. As for our bodies, in the same way, we consider it as a self, but actually what is it? By taking away form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness, you will not be found! It is also like a bubble, it looks tangible, but with one touch it breaks. Not only is the bubble hollow inside, but it also breaks very easily. It does not have a solid substance, and disappears so quickly, what is the condition right before it disappears? “A home of all illness.” Alas, all the roots of illness and suffering arise from it!

[34A,00.09 (手抄稿 第五冊 p37 L1)]

“A basis for the sufferings of old age and the like.” No one can escape either sickness or aging, from these two arise all kinds of sufferings. For us right now, alas! We need to feed our body and feed it again and again. In my case, I ate a little bit, well! Such a little bit would cause discomfort. Even though I feel well, after eating, yet the body needs attention here and there; it has no redeeming qualities at all. So, with our understanding of this, what should be done? “Day and night I will conduct myself as a person of great capacity.” Then this is what we truly should pursue to resolve all problems. Thus, day and night these are truly what we should engage in, this is it. Do not let it go to waste without achieving virtuous effects. So in the Lamrim text, once you have understood leisure and opportunity [v.1 chapter 7], and then review this part [v.1 chapter 8] – studying and learning from these chapters and the text itself are of great meaning. Ah, how true is it that the physical form is of no great significance [if without putting the effort in virtuous spiritual training]. Honestly, the physical form is short of much meaning, yet within the overall cyclic existence, it is the most precious. Why is it the most precious? Because, even though it is meaningless, it implicates a special characteristic – only with this physical form are you able to properly take advantage of it and to be liberated from the cyclic existence and even have the capability to help other beings. Besides this purpose, there isn’t any other opportunity for us to be liberated. So, with this thought in mind, you will not want to waste, never want to waste this human life! What should you do during every available moment? You

would strive on meditation practice and never let it go to waste.

[34A,01.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p38 L5)]

Question: From the outset one should guide students through the practices of a person of great capacity. What is the use of training in paths which are shared with the persons of small and medium capacities?

Some people may ask, since your goal is to be guided to great capacity, thus, just guide you directly to great capacity, because this is your main purpose. Why bother to have shared medium or shared small capacities? Or can you just say that I am a great capacity practitioner, wouldn't that be more straightforward? Next, the author explains,

[34A,02.20 (手抄稿 第五冊 p38 L9)]

Reply: Training in the paths that are shared with these two is a prerequisite for the development of the path of a person of great capacity. I will explain how this is so.

Both shared capacities are the prerequisite for studying the great capacity earnestly. What are these two? They are the foundation for guiding you to great capacity, the guiding foundation to great capacity. Besides these required foundations, there are other specific reasons. Later, the text will use the main

principles. So this paragraph specifically tells us although it is divided into three capacities, but what is it trying to guide you? That is, what is your purpose? It points out to us this is the one and only vehicle for us to achieve ultimate Buddhahood. For those of us who have already encountered and understood Buddha Dharma, everyone should recognize that this should be our ultimate aim of spirit training in the end. Thus, what is the benefit of pointing it out in the very beginning of the Lamrim teachings? It is to properly set your purpose of life. Then, you would not branch off by other diversions and you would not take a wayward path or detour. Furthermore, you will naturally think to achieve this ultimate path, what is the most accurate and perfect approach? By the time you probe into it, detours can be avoided. For instance, you have been told the above and you contemplate, right! This is the principle concept. However, since your goal is to attain ultimate perfection, by looking around and the available condition is not promising. Thus, in comparison to the suggestion in the Lamrim text, of course, you won't want to take chances to rush into trying. By the time you turned around after bruised all over by banging around, and who knows how many eons would have passed. All these conditions can be avoided.

[34A,04.08 (手抄稿 第五冊 p39 L9)]

**b) Why one guides students through such stages
Why one guides students through such stages is
explained in terms of the actual reason and the
purpose.**

Thus, next the author tells us the reason why he guides us with such stages. The first part is “the actual reason,” the second is “the purpose.” First, he explains the reason, and the second is to clarify the benefits of doing so. And what is the effect? The first part.

[34A,04.30 (手抄稿 第五冊 p39 L12)]

i) The actual reason

The entrance to the Mahayana is solely the spirit of supreme enlightenment.

What is the actual entrance to the Mahayana? It is to develop the most laudable spirit of ultimate enlightenment. This we have to properly recognize, it is very important and crucial! In other words, what is the actual practice of the root of Mahayana Buddha Dharma? It is the aspiration of the spirit of ultimate enlightenment. Whenever you have generated this aspiration and cultivated the deeds, both are the true collections for perfect Buddhahood. Otherwise, if this aspiration is missing, no matter how many good deeds you have done, well, you are still circling outside the doorway. Hence, the other day, I said: “Ignoring the spirit of enlightenment and practicing all sorts of kind deeds is considered a demonic act.” This is not to say that you don’t have the aspiration; even after generating it and then you forget the aspiration while engaging in deeds, this is considered a misdeed. This is the primary concept that we have to recognize first. Followed by concepts that are listed base on this fundamental objective to allow us to establish such firm recognition

as well as revealing to us the expedient approaches for stepwise practice.

[34A,05.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p40 L9)]

English LR v.1 p. 133-134

Once this is produced in your mind-stream, it is as Santideva states in his *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*:

**At the instant destitute beings
Bound in the prison of existence give rise to
this spirit
They are called “*sugatas*’ children”...**

English LR v.1 p. 134

Thus, these beings enter the Mahayana upon being named “conqueror’s children” or “bodhisattvas.”

As long as this supreme spirit of enlightenment arises in our mental stream, that is when we are count as Bodhisattvas. These Bodhisattvas are considered the Conqueror’s children. So generally when the sutras mention Conqueror’s children, they usually mean the Conqueror’s children who have generated the supreme spirit of enlightenment, or they are called Bodhisattvas. That is when we have truly entered the circle of Mahayana. *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* validates this initial aspiration: even if we are still ordinary beings at this moment of our aspiration, therefore, we are still bonded by the cyclic existence, still have all sorts of afflictions; yet we are considered Conqueror’s children, this is Bodhisattva. However, we should not misconstrue this aspiration for the supreme

spirit of enlightenment by claiming: “Well, I have developed the spirit of enlightenment!” Not yet! The aspiration I refer to now is our initial seed when we say: “Ah, I am inspired!” However, in reality, we have not conformed to it yet. But this mentality is certainly planting the first cause. With this cause, you then strive on it. Once you have reached a certain level, the above qualification of Bodhisattva would arise. So here we refer to this aspiration of the supreme spirit of enlightenment as the conventional spirit of enlightenment. The content of this conventional spirit of enlightenment is discussed at the beginning of the great capacity [v.2]. In the beginning, the Lamrim text tells us the requirement for this recognition, by then we will have a standard of measurement. Otherwise, if we lack proper recognition, we will mistakenly consider a tiny aspiration to be as though I have the supreme spirit of enlightenment, I am a Bodhisattva, and I am qualified to practice great teachings, very sorry! The efficacy would be missing and such effort turns out to be useless!

[34A,07.49 (手抄稿 第五冊 p41 L9)]

So in the *Biography of Venerable Atisha*, there are several stories. Some practitioners in the stories claimed to have attained the stage of generation and the stage of completion – they thought they have cultivated the stage of generation. Very sorry, this is not in accordance, not at all! There is even the possibility that they might be descended, why? You don’t even have the “foundation!” So at present, many of us who are studying the tantric practice think: “Ah, Tantra is the best.” Thus they also want to apply the “four

performances,” after engaging in it for a while – needless to talk about the four performances, even if you have practiced 400 performances without the spirit of enlightenment, you are still spinning idly and going nowhere! So I have always mentioned all along: you have to understand, what is the content of the teaching? It is not for you to chant this rite accordingly once, reciting it once is not enough, this we have to understand. Let’s continue.

[34A,08.43 (手抄稿 第五冊 p42 L1)]

If they ruin their spirit of enlightenment, they expel themselves from the company of Mahayana practitioners.

Whenever you retreat from this aspiration, you are expelling yourself from being a Mahayana practitioner.

[34A,08.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p42 L3)]

Therefore, those who wish to enter the Mahayana must develop this spirit of enlightenment by making many forms of effort.

So for those of us who truly want to practice Mahayana, what should we do? We need to apply various methods, strive on them to generate the supreme spirit of enlightenment. This statement has great meaning; in case this spirit of enlightenment is like our wrong view of feeling: “Well! I have generated the supreme spirit of enlightenment and ready to save all

living beings!” If with one thought like this count as aspiration, then this statement [of “by making many forms of effort”] is redundant, not needed. However, to truly generate the supreme spirit of enlightenment, it is not like our current way of thinking as just express it verbally. For the true content requires the understanding of many expedient means. The expedient means still require your tactful listening and studying. Mere understanding is not enough; one is still required to strive accordingly. Once applied, the mind has to correspond to it and that is the true arising of the aspiration, by then it is genuinely developed.

[34A,09.59 (手抄稿 第五冊 p42 L11)]

For instance, we come here to take the monastic vow, the rite is very simple, you go there shave your hair and don on the robe, that is very simple, it won't take more than one or two hours. However, for you to truly obtain the essence of the precepts, well! Not that easy. So this aspiration of the spirit of enlightenment of yours is the same, when it is truly developed, the conforming karmic seeds in our mindstream would form a powerful commitment. Once this is developed, the power is very, very incredible! When the spirit is developed, according to the illustration of the scriptures, definitely, such good qualities are incredibly beyond your imagination. That is when one is considered the Conqueror's child.

[34A,10.42 (手抄稿 第五冊 p43 L3)]

The supreme texts that teach the stages of the bodhisattva path, Santideva's *Compendium of*

***Trainings and Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, speak of how to develop it. They state that you first need to meditate on its benefits. Then you intensify your delight in these benefits from the depths of your heart. This must be accompanied with practicing the seven branches of worship along with the practice of refuge.**

To generate such spirit of enlightenment, there is a required prerequisite, and what is that? It is to meditate on the laudable benefits of the aspiration. Why is it required? I will briefly go over it here. We now often talk about Bodhichitta as well as Bodhisattva deeds, and what wonderful deeds Buddha did at the causal stage, we also praise, admire, and venerate those deeds. However, when it comes to our turn, what happens? “Alas, this is too difficult! This is too great a task, I can’t accomplish it!” Even if you think about engaging in it, when you come across a situation where you have to put in a little more effort, you are totally out of it, don’t know what to do. Why? It is because these Bodhisattva deeds based on the supreme spirit of enlightenment are very arduous, too hard to carry out. If there is no specific benefit, who would want to engage in such difficult and arduous tasks? So it is very explicit and clear that no one is an exception: why would you want to be bothered if there isn’t any benefit in the end?

[34A,12.21 (手抄稿 第五冊 p43 L13)]

Therefore, it is like what our Confucian philosophy often says that a true great being should do it without expectation, this is considered appropriate. This

standard is rather high. However, this statement has a big loophole. May I ask, for an ordinary being, who would want to do anything without expecting something in return; after all that work not to get any benefit in return? Thus, Venerable Yin-guang specifically said that, if you tell an elderly country farmer, a gardener or farmhand: “You just go ahead sow the seeds and don’t expect to harvest.” After all your effort in planting, not asking for a harvest, who would do such a thing? I believe all of you sitting here would not be willing to do so, right? At least for me, I definitely wouldn’t do it. Why work hard for no benefit at all? Actual Buddha Dharma is absolutely not like this! So we know true Buddha Dharma is just the opposite, it tells you that this is very difficult, but if you persist in it, there will bring you incredibly great and special benefits! Just like that. So in the very beginning when you give it a try, sure, you don’t feel like it, and it’s so hard. Later, when you recognize it to have such huge benefits. The more you think about it, the better it gets! Later on, all genuine benefits for you are included. By that time, if you were told to quit, it would be impossible for you to stop. Hence, the actual proficiency of Buddha Dharma is its precise approach and orderly guidance for you.

[34A,13.39 (手抄稿 第五冊 p44 L10)]

So that’s why I say the reason that we are not able to properly apply meditation practice is not that we are inferior; it is our deep attachment that we are not able to let go of our personal opinions, we’re unwilling to study proper perception. This is our destructive weakness. If you understood precisely that your put in earnest effort

in working hard for a while, at end, the benefit is all yours. Besides, all the best advantages must arise from this effort. I believe every one of us is willing to take such a path. So, let's randomly pick one example now: [in Taiwan] everyone is trying to get into a school. Well, nowadays there are more schools available, in the past while there were fewer schools, so the entrance test was hard! Although there are more schools now, everybody still strives hard to squeeze in. If you think about the advantage of these schools, there is not much! If you don't get into a school, you can make a living on your own. Even if you are selling popsicles, and that will help you to earn some money. But if you get into a school you have to pay a lot of tuition, right? Yet why are people willing to do so? Everyone knows, regardless you are peddling popsicles now or working as an apprentice, you don't earn much. If you study hard for a few years, in the future you will have great wealth and status.

[34A,14.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p45 L4)]

But wealth and status may not be guaranteed! Many had the conventional education yet are still miserably poor for their entire lifetimes, this is possible. However, it is the best approach for now, and it's better than the average approach to making a living, so everyone should strive hard at it. Now, Buddha Dharma assures you a better future! And when the benefit multiplies, it is totally incomparable to our worldly standard. For now, from the worldly perspective, if I don't want to go to school and just become a carpenter's apprentice for the income of New Taiwan dollars \$1000

per day, is that the approximate pay? I am not sure. Well, carpentry is very much in demand nowadays! Like here, we need a door, looking around for a while and we still cannot find an available carpenter. They make good business if one works hard; the monthly income can be over NT\$20,000. But people are not willing to become carpenters, and still trying to go to school. Even after completing conventional education, there is no assurance for you to find a government position or for you to become a millionaire. That is uncertain! It's very possible you would work as a basic public servant, with just over NT\$10,000 every month. Nevertheless, you would strive very hard at it. But with studying Buddha Dharma, if you have the proper understanding, you will find that, even though you won't get the immediate benefit, you are still encouraged to strive at it. In the future, you will certainly obtain it. The income at that time will be incomparable to anything in the mundane world. When we have this level of understanding, by then everybody would strive to study the teaching at all costs.

[34A,16.21 (手抄稿 第五冊 p45 L15)]

So, first, when we are serious about applying proper meditation practice, the teaching would explain the laudable advantage of doing so. This is very important, too important! With this understanding of yours, this recognition alone is not merely reasoning. One not only needs to apply various perspectives to validate it, but also further test it with actual experience, that is how it works. This reasoning is absolutely true. And then, by showing these examples and facts, that is when you will

sense the assurance. And that will be when you are willing to take the path. Then, your certainty of these laudable benefits becomes uncontrived. You will pronounce with full confidence: “Well, this is it!” And then “intensify your delight in these benefits from the depths of your heart.” Well! The author did not ask you to apply it right away, interesting! You have to obtain precise understanding and intensify your delight in these benefits. What is the delight in these benefits? It is the force of joyous perseverance, to be full of bravery in engaging in this task. You will definitely not withdraw under any circumstance. Speaking of this intensification, usually we talk about warriors on the battlefield, what is the characteristic of the warrior? He has only one goal: to conquer any difficulties and any enemies, and he is not afraid of any challenge from his enemies. He courageously overcomes any hardship! Intensify this mentality; not by merely having it, we must enhance it. By then, you will forge ahead with all your might, you will certainly tame all enemies and be victorious, thus achieve all that you aspire to.

[34A,18.13 (手抄稿 第五冊 p46 L12)]

So, other than this aspiration, what else is required? During actual practice, we must take refuge and apply the seven branches of worship [v.1 p.94]! Well, these seven branches of worship are the same as the Ten Great Vows of Samantabhadra. So, truthfully speaking, what is the first step in our study of Buddha Dharma? It is precisely taking refuge and the Ten Great Vows. Practice it in the beginning and, after you have advanced step by step, you must still rely on it to lead

you to Pure Land. So, here, it explicitly tells us that achievement can happen in one lifetime. However, will it work for us in this lifetime? No, it won't! We are at the level of applying faith. So from ordinary beings to the level of faith, the fulfillment of ten stages of faith* it is not that quick, it takes a longer time.

[*Ten stages of faith: please refer to the “Progressive ranks of the 52 Bodhisattva’s positions in cultivation” in Master’s commentary on prologue in translation book 1]

[34A,18.58 (手抄稿 第五冊 p47 L3)]

But here everyone should not be worried about: alas, isn't it dreadful in cyclic existence for such a long time? Yes, very dreadful! However, what follows is different. There is one type of dreadfulness, alas! So frightful, you will beat the drum of retreat: “Well, forget it, I will not engage in it, and just be careless and nonchalant.” Now your attitude is different because you have been given the correct explanation: exactly because it is dreadful, you have to find the cause of it. If you can find the cause of the horror, remove it from the causal stage. If you do not have dreadful cause, there is no need for you to be afraid. Use this dreadfulness as our encouragement so as not to engage in dreadful causes, quickly engage in what? Engage in the causes for happiness. By the time you have planted the seed for happiness, and when the effect arises, the happiness will be more than you can take! Thus, for actual cultivation of this direct Mahayana path, not only will one obtain the best effect, but also it is the most joyful task for now. This is absolutely the truth.

[34A,20.02 (手抄稿 第五冊 p47 L11)]

Take the case of our present state that we have this experience. We can have a feel for this because every one of us has a mental awareness. What is this mental awareness? For instance, if we attend an international tournament today, our ordinary highly elaborate but ineffective method is fine because it is just for fun. But if we go there to compete with a properly trained opponent, it takes a certain effort. If it were for an international competition, one would try with all might! At the end of the competition, if you win, then that happiness and triumph are incredible! We also have experienced this kind of mentality, right? We do have it, and this is true! Now, in this above competition example, our winning is uncertain. However, in the case of applying Buddha Dharma, you are for sure to win, why? Well! If you know yourself and others well, that will lead you to emerge victorious from every battle.

[34A,20.58 (手抄稿 第五冊 p48 L4)]

So proper teachings would accurately tell you precisely to understand your inner capacity clearly, as well as the conditions of your opponent. With your understanding of this precise content, you realize that as long as you abide by it, you will overcome the opponent with 100% assurance. So, before the fight, you have confidence and, during the fight, you are full of courage. At the end of the fight, you are extremely happy, just like that! What does this rely on? It relies on what you were

told: “Alas! This world is filled with suffering!” This driving force pushes you forward. Thus, it does not mean that such effort of yours bears any suffering; suffering is definitely there. However, after pointing out suffering, the resulting path is completely different and is the most accurate guidance. So why is it that we often talk about giving resemblance or approximation teachings? That is because the proper teaching from the sutra states: “Alas, this practice is not easy!” And then, you could misunderstand its meaning [that it is effortless in applying the teaching.] You appear to reading it from the sutra; however, you end up diverted the intended meaning to who knows where. This is something I want to mention here in passing. Continuing,

[34A,22.04 (手抄稿 第五冊 p48 L13)]

If you condense the benefits spoken of in this way, they are twofold: temporary and final.

So, if you have truly developed the aspiration for the supreme spirit of enlightenment and train in the benefits of the spirit of enlightenment, well! Both temporary and final goodness are still needed. In the earlier discussion, isn't seeking high status meant for those of small capacity alone? Please pay attention: it refers to the shared small capacity here! Well, for the highest level of the great capacity, you still rely on this shared small capacity! The advancement of higher status in the small capacity is very little; whereas the high status of ultimate great capacity is with full-fledged completeness. So the author tells us, [the high status of the shared small

capacity] is included [in the great capacity]. Here, he further explains:

[34A,22.46 (手抄稿 第五冊 p49 L4)]

The first is again twofold: not falling into miserable realms and being reborn in happy realms.

With regard to high status, there are two parts as well: one is not falling into the miserable realms, and the second is to be reborn in the fortunate realms. Now the benefits we seek are nothing more than these contents. So, let's look at the content that comes next. "Not falling into miserable realms," this includes all three miserable realms [hell, hungry ghost, and animal realms]. As long as you abide by the teachings, there is no room in the miserable realms for you. Satisfied? Well, by then we will be satisfied. Honestly speaking, in our present world, although there is more challenging than in the past, but we feel pretty happy about it. Actually, there is more to it. Keep up with the practice will make it even better. The author tells us:

[34A,23.32 (手抄稿 第五冊 p49 L10)]

That is, once you have developed this spirit of enlightenment, you clear away many previously accumulated causes for miserable rebirths, and you end the continuous accumulation of them in the future.

Well, here the text points out the essential outline. Aren't you seeking this benefit? Is it provisional or final benefit? Within the provisional [high status or temporary], the first benefit is not to descend to a miserable rebirth, which is the fundamental aspect. And then, you aspire to be reborn into fortunate realms. The author says once you generate this mentality, what will the advantage be? Your past negative causes can be purified and can be cleansed. In the future, you will continue to eradicate it from arising in your mind-stream. What are the reasons for our downfall? Because of our negative deeds in the past, before they come to fruition, the effect is still waiting there. When one continues to engage in new negative deeds, thus we are falling back! So our sincerity in studying Buddha Dharma requires confession and repentance. Now, once you have generated this supreme spirit of enlightenment, all the previous negative causes can be quickly purified. This power is tremendously great. Since the negativity can be purified, of course, you will not downfall. Thus, what about being reborn in fortunate realms?

[34A,24.54 (手抄稿 第五冊 p50 L4)]

You also vastly increase your previously accumulated causes of happy rebirths since they are imbued with this spirit. Furthermore, because you are motivated by this spirit, the causes that you create anew will be inexhaustible.

As for a happy rebirth, it certainly has its respective karmic causes. It is waiting there to come to fruition. Once you have this aspiration, it is wonderful! This

aspiration will multiply. For instance, you have saved \$10,000 in the beginning. Once you have this aspiration, these \$10,000 will multiply into \$100 million. Wow, just that wonderful! Moreover, the newly created causes, those ones created now, because you are imbued with this spirit, they will also multiply accordingly.

[34A,25.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p50 L10)]

Here, we may ask why is it multiplying to this huge extent after becoming imbued with the aspiration? The generation of our karmic deeds must involve three aspects. That is to say, the formation of this karmic quality involves three aspects. The first one is I, the one who generates it. That is, with what kind of intention and action? The other is the recipient of my karmic deed. When doing anything, it has to be this way, say, “I give you \$300.” “I” am the giver, “giving \$300” to “you.” [v.2 p.95 three spheres] Or, “I hit you.” The former is a virtuous deed; the latter is a non-virtuous one. The completion of these three spheres is the karma, which is the sum of each of these aspects. Within these, the two external factors are fixed – “money” is fixed at \$300, and the “you” is the recipient. If the recipient is a human being, then hitting this person creates the transgression. If the recipient is a dog, then the effect of hitting is weaker. If the recipient is a Bodhisattva, then the consequence is incredibly serious! Regardless of your external factors, although the adjustment is done within your mind, the impact from the fixed objective condition is still there. What is most important is the aspiration of “my” mind can make tremendous difference.

[34A,27.09 (手抄稿 第五冊 p51 L6)]

Normally, your supple attitude will be, ah, here he comes! When you see a beggar, you give him NT\$300 this is one attitude. The \$300 is a fixed number, and then this beggar is also a fixed object. The third one is your mental attitude. It could be that you saw the beggar, “Alas, this person is so pitiful, how pathetic! I want to help him.” Based on such attitude in planting the cause, the effect will be much greater. If you have the aspiration for the supreme spirit of enlightenment, due to this attitude corresponds to the Dharma realm, regardless of what you do, the effect is immeasurable, just like that! Take our present situation for instance; say we are doing small business. By the same token, I have a small business and after developing one product for a while and then put it out for sale here. If my shop markets it to sell internationally, any small item that you are marketing would be sold around the world. The benefit applies to the entire world; the income you profited is also from around the world, just like that.

[34A,28.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p51 L15)]

So to purify negativity is the same way, as well as to accumulate merits. Because from where does our negative karma arise? It arises from when we harm others. Now, you want to help others, and the same applies. In the past, when you harmed others, usually you only harm one person – I argued with that person and then he felt hurt. So when you sincerely want to remove this negative karma, just working it out with him

and that will do. Now, what is my motivation for this spirit of enlightenment I have developed? It is that I want to help everyone. In the end, not only have you helped this person but, at the same time, you have helped all living beings. So the force to remove the negative obstacle is also extremely powerful, and the merits accumulated are also immeasurable. This detailed description will be covered later in the karma [v.1 chapter 13~16] and Bodhichitta [v.2 chapter 1~8] sections. By then, you will be very clear about this. A detailed explanation will be provided at that time. So this is the provisional high status.

Relying upon this spirit of enlightenment, you will easily achieve the final aims, liberation and omniscience.

[34A,29.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p52 L7)]

What is the final aim? It is omniscience, an unsurpassed benefit. It still relies on this spirit to have easy achievement.

[34B,00.04 (手抄稿 第五冊 p53 L2)]

From the outset you must have an uncontrived aspiration that seeks to attain these final and temporary benefits. If you do not have this, you might say, “I will strive to develop this spirit” on account of those benefits that arise from developing the spirit of enlightenment, but it will be mere words.

Let's take a look at this next statement. Provided with the two above, regardless of whether it is for the laudable benefits of the present high-status or the final certain-goodness, it supposes that you did not have an attitude of sincere admiration and hope in the past. If you didn't have it, what would the condition be? Although we hear the saying now: "Ah! All these benefits arise from the aspiration, well, this aspiration requires hard work." Even though by saying these words verbally, this is only empty talk – "mere words." The next two statements, let's have a look.

The hollowness of this claim is very clear once you examine your mind.

[34B,00.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p53 L8)]

As long as we turn inward to examine our mental streams, it becomes very clear, very explicit. However, what does the text point out to us here? One thing it points out is that we didn't understand it before, so the ignorant arrogance gradually reduces and we notice, "Ah, so I did not know about it, I lack this awareness from way beginning." Moreover, from now on I should earnestly plant the cause to not make the same mistake again – now the proper cause is planted. So don't be upset with yourself when you hear this statement and sound the drum of retreat. Actually, one should just do the opposite. Upon hearing this, one should recognize this point, and actually knowing how to work at it from here on. This is one approach.

[34B,01.55 (手抄稿 第五冊 p54 L5)]

Therefore, first you must train in the thought that is common to persons of small and medium capacities in order to develop a wish to attain the two benefits, high status [as a human or deity] and certain goodness [liberation or omniscience].

So now that we have this understanding and the feeling is: “well, that is what I want!” Regardless of which of the two benefits [we want], upon recognizing the laudable advantage, of course, we expect to obtain it. To obtain it, we have to apply the practice accordingly, step by step. By then, what prerequisites do we need to have in the practice? The prerequisites are the small capacity and medium capacity, so it is known as the shared mentality of medium and small capacities. The “thought” is our inclination, the preferences in our minds. In other words, the power of preference will encourage us to move forward. This power of preference has a very wide range: you have this accurate recognition, and you are inspired to seek this path. And then you look for the method, wholeheartedly strive at it, all these mentalities are included within this thought.

[34B,02.55 (手抄稿 第五冊 p54 L12)]

After you have developed such a wish, you engage in cultivating the spirit of enlightenment, the attitude that produces these benefits. As you do this, you must develop the great compassion and love that are the foundation of this attitude.

If you wish to attain the above advantage, what is the root of this aspiration? It is great love and compassion. This “great love and compassion” is the root of the supreme spirit of enlightenment, as well as the foundation of cultivating this supreme spirit – this is the systematic order. Now let’s continue to look at the following explanation for the reason why.

[34B,03.32 (手抄稿 第五冊 p55 L2)]

English LR v.1 p. 134-135

In other words, when you contemplate how you wander through cyclic existence, bereft of happiness and tormented by suffering, your body hairs should stand on end. Without this experience, it would be impossible for you to become unable to tolerate other beings’ torment while they suffer and are bereft of happiness as they wander through cyclic existence.

In the section above, to develop the supreme spirit of enlightenment one is required to cultivate great love and compassion as its foundation. But to cultivate this great love and compassion, one must first strive on the mentality of shared small and medium capacities as its basis. So why is it so? What is the reason? Next, the text tells us, in order to know what is small capacity, or medium capacity, the author will specify it here. Actually, this was already covered yesterday. The person of small capacity is seeking immediate high-status. They are looking for happiness, whereas the actual laudable small

capacity does not desire present enjoyment but invests in their future life. Why are they not attached to present enjoyment? The main reason is when you are attached to immediate enjoyment. You will only be deceived by this desire for material resources, and wouldn't see all the true benefits behind it. And, in the end, it causes you a great loss, or even you might not get the immediate high-status. So this is flawed.

[34B,04.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p55 L11)]

Thus, if you sincerely wish to attain this high-status – the so-called high-status is step by step improvement right now – in that case very sorry, you must not be attached to immediate enjoyment. Furthermore, because you are seeking future high-status, after advancing step by step you will discover whether you are cycling between human and deity rebirths. At a certain point, downfall is bound to happen. Well, this is not the ultimate solution! Thus, that will be the time that we are encouraged: since we are seeking true happiness, this is absolutely not thorough and we should think of a way to escape the cyclic existence. This is still based on you wanting to attain happiness, to remove suffering. So the concept here is very clear! Therefore, the shared medium capacity is for us to escape cyclic existence, so why does the author say these two [small and medium capacities] are the foundation of the great love and compassion of the great capacity? Next, it explains.

[34B,05.46 (手抄稿 第五冊 p56 L4)]

What does great love and compassion mean? It is not only to help myself but also to help all others – rescue them from the abyss of the sea of suffering, right? This everyone can understand. If you don't even recognize the affliction in the sea of suffering, and you claim to rescue them from it, how will this work? May I ask, where does this help come from? Isn't it absurd? You tell them not to grasp, their reply is: "So for me not to cling onto it and give it to you, for you to enjoy it?" That is the fault we have now. At least you are aware of the cyclic existence is not worthwhile, and you are in the midst of it, truly filled with unbearable suffering! You deeply understand this suffering and renounce it, yet you are unable to leave by yourself and need to help others. That is when we are qualified to say, "I will rescue you from cyclic existence." Isn't this very clear? So without the foundation of the shared small and medium capacity, one cannot possibly talk about the great capacity, is this clear? You must be able to feel this cyclic existence, and recognize that it is filled with extreme suffering. That is when you cannot bear that there are those immersed in it. This is considered great love and compassion.

[34B,07.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p56 L13)]

Now we talk about great love and compassion, but actually, we don't even understand the true nature of cyclic existence, we become attached to it and won't let go. Needless to mention the shared medium capacity, we don't even truly understand the shared small capacity, how could it be possible for us to even discuss

great capacity? So the text before and after tells us that you have to first recognize the characteristic of cyclic existence. What is the characteristic? There is only suffering and no happiness. So the text says it is bereft of happiness and tormented by suffering. What's more is that you are forever wandering through such existence. Upon thinking of it, you can't bear it. If you don't have this mentality, it won't work. The author says, "your body hairs should stand on end" and this actually is happening. All those who are cultivating renunciation, upon the thought of cyclic existence, alas, tears begin running down their face with tremendous fear. Now, take our apparent worldly attitude for example, we say, "This is suffering!" Actually, within one's mind, alas, one is not able to let go, totally no sense of suffering at all. So the author says that our body hairs should stand on end, yet you talk about salvation or helping others, where does it come from? You all think about it, is it right?

[34B,08.27 (手抄稿 第五冊 p57 L7)]

Now we understand that this is great compassion. So what is it? It is seeing all living beings immersed in the cycle of suffering. You cannot bear it, as though you were their loving mother. Just like a wealthy family, everything is perfectly fulfilled, their only child who is very smart, good looking, and obedient. However, this only child is ill and dying. At that time, how would his mother feel? This is the mentality of great compassion and love; to want to remove the child's suffering. And when the illness is cured, the mother wants to provide him with all happiness. This is the mind of great compassion and love. So you now claim to rescue all

living beings, what is required? Great love – think of all worldly beings who have no happiness, so you want to provide them with true happiness. Why do we say that there is no happiness? Because you know clearly that all worldly things are deceptive and constantly changing. In the end, you will downfall and, most of the time you are descending and there is very little time that you are happy.

[34B,09.46 (手抄稿 第五冊 p58 L1)]

It can even be put in this way: right now you are earning \$10 or \$8, whereas the principle investment is \$30 million or \$50 million. We all do things like this – we may feel, “Well, such investment won’t work!” Furthermore, upon sensing suffering, “Alas, this person’s suffering is unbearable!” So you have to practice the shared small and medium capacities first, so to truly understand the suffering of cyclic existence. Upon noticing others’ lack of knowledge, you cannot bear to see them in that condition; this is when you develop genuine great love and compassion. With it, next, you need to fulfill the mentality of great love and compassion. By then, you will find out that you still have to rely on proper methods. So with great compassion, one still needs great wisdom. With great wisdom one still needs to practice great deeds – that is the Bodhisattva deeds and they are to achieve the Buddhahood! This is very clear. Up to now, this apparent attitude will become gradually clear. As for each part, how to inspire the mentality of renouncing cyclic existence, how to develop a compassionate attitude, all of each proper content will be explained very clearly, very explicitly later.

[34B,11.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p58 L10)]

English LR v.1 p. 135

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds:

**These beings have yet to dream
Of such an attitude
Toward even their own welfare;
How then could they produce it for other's
welfare?**

In this commentary, it states: before you benefit living beings – before thinking of benefiting others – you have not yet even dreamed about the principles of benefiting the self. May I ask, how can you benefit others? Why is it put in this way? How do you explain your wish to benefit living beings? Because you know the suffering of cyclic existence, so you want to act for their benefit. Now, you don't even know that cyclic existence is a matter of suffering – you have not even dreamed about it, and you are talking about benefiting others. What benefit are you referring to? Thus, we already mentioned this earlier, to propagate the teachings, to spread the Dharma. What is Dharma? What are the teachings? Well, well, well! Now here the text will tell us more.

[34B,12.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p59 L2)]

However, here we have to pay attention! We should not just hear these statements and randomly criticize others, this is definitely not allowed. The Dharma is

mainly for self-reflection. I want to be inspired with Bodhichitta, that is my business. I have this recognition then I help others. How do you know that this other person is not a Bodhisattva? The manifestation of Bodhisattvas is not only during the degenerate time, but they can also be in the animal realm! This is the first point. Even if he is not a Bodhisattva, didn't you wish to take the Bodhisattva path? Yes, if I were a Bodhisattva, I would help him! If this other person is right, you admire, praise, and learn from him; if he is wrong, you should sympathize with, pity, and help him. How can you laugh at him? Thus, regardless of which way you go, once you have a true understanding of the essence of the Bodhichitta, the benefit is there. Actually, taking it one step further, by then you will know what your mental attitude is, for [the essence of Bodhichitta] is in it. With such mental intention, if advancement is appropriate, you will have more improvement. Otherwise, you will still think that you are being very reasonable, well! In this case, you would end up taking a detour. So the difference here is the proper perception. Thus, with regard to the above concept,

[34B,13.13 (手抄稿 第五冊 p59 L11)]

Consequently, in the context of the person of small capacity you reflect on how you are harmed by the suffering of the miserable realms. In the context of the person of medium capacity you contemplate on how, even in high status, there is suffering and there is no peaceful bliss.

You are required to take the path of small and medium capacities. Well, with this mention of small capacity, why small capacity? Why seek a better future life? It is to say that being occupied by the present task is not the ultimate solution. If a wrong act is committed while seeking a better future life, one would become demeaned, so refrain from engaging in negative deeds. This is what is covered in the small capacity, so we have to engage in virtuous deeds quickly, just like this. As for medium capacity, even after one engages in virtuous deeds, one is still within the circle of rebirth. Therefore, we need to be liberated from it. Once you have this mentality,

[34B,13.57 (手抄稿 第五冊 p60 L2)]

Then you foster the development of love and compassion by cultivating a sense of empathy for living beings, whom you hold as close to you. From this you develop the spirit of enlightenment.

Here is the explanation. Great, you have your own recognition and the feeling is: “Alas, it is right! I am only a practitioner, I still need to put myself in others’ positions!” At that time, you then begin to consider others and put yourself in their positions to help them. Visualize all living beings as having been your mothers, ah! How my mother treated me [kindly], and now I only care about myself, will this work? Thus, great compassion is generated. Conversely, to give others happiness is known as great love; seeing others suffer and removing it is great compassion. This is what you should do, and then the compassionate attitude can be

inspired. Once you have a compassionate mentality, then Bodhichitta arises based on it. So the text says:

[34B,14.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p60 L8)]

Therefore, training in the thought common to persons of small and medium capacities is the method of producing an uncontrived spirit of enlightenment;

If you aspire to generate true Bodhichitta, the practice of both of these two [small and medium capacities] are required. Isn't this clear? So it is known as shared medium and small capacities. Now we say: "Well, I need to apply the Mahayana practice, this Theravada act is not needed!" This is equivalent to uprooting the foundation and then trying to build the skyscraper, isn't it absurd? This is where it goes wrong. The text says,

[34B,15.10 (手抄稿 第五冊 p60 L12)]

it is not some separate path along which your teacher leads you.

These shared medium and small capacities, they are not for you to stop right there, this we have to understand. Up to this point, there is one thing here we have to talk about. Certainly, we have this understanding, and we will never casually criticize the Theravada or even the worldly things, such as *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons*. However, we know that these two

[small and medium capacities] are not thorough, this we have to discern very explicitly and recognize it very clearly.

[34B,15.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p61 L3)]

Up to here, last night there was a fellow practitioner who showed me a book, it is written by a practitioner of the southern lineage [which is the Theravada tradition]. Right now, many of these concepts of ours, often due to our lack of knowledge, we then form all sorts of misunderstandings. This is very pitiful and extremely regretful. If we can continue to study the entirety of Lamrim in its systematic order, naturally it will be very, very explicit and very, very clear. The so-called shared small and shared medium capacities and boundaries of the [unshared] small and medium capacities will become very clear to you. Well! What level is it up to this point, what is the level up to that point, and what is the level upon further advancing? Once you understand each and every concept and their appropriate attitude, then you will be very clear about the argument [between Theravada and Mahayana traditions] – the reason why they argue, and the differences in the arguments. This text also mentions one aspect: often Mahayana practitioners like to think [Theravada practitioners] are self-caring. Actually, [Theravada practitioners] disagree, just like that. In fact, this “self-caring” has a very strict definition. Before our understanding of this definition, we just take the two words of self-care and use them frivolously – this is where the problems arise. Once you have a true understanding of this definition, it will become very clear without any mistake. I just mention

this in passing. It is a good thing that our study is step-by-step, so we can form proper understanding. And then, naturally, you will not be trapped in it. Otherwise, no matter what others say, you are trapped in it and it will lead to arguments, and you will always be at fault.

[34B,17.29 (手抄稿 第五冊 p62 L1)]

Accordingly, you work at many ways of purifying yourself of nonvirtue and accumulating virtue using the practices for developing both the attitude that is shared with persons of small capacity and the attitude that is shared with persons of medium capacity. These are practices such as going for refuge, and thinking about karma and its effects. Understand that these too help you to develop the spirit of enlightenment,

Well, since we have an understanding of the two stages of the shared medium and small capacities, what should we practice? The proper practices should be taking refuge and karma! The author first says, “thinking about.” This is saying, at that stage our actual approaches to practice should be taking refuge and karma. Moreover, once you understand this reasoning, strive quickly to “purify nonvirtue and accumulate virtue.” We should know, what are these practices? They are all preparations for the spirit of enlightenment.

[34B,18.15 (手抄稿 第五冊 p62 L7)]

because they correspond to either the seven branches of worship or the practice of refuge,

What are all these for? These practices are the most special methods for us to improve and purify our minds. These practices are taking refuge and the seven branches of worship. So actually, what should our first study step be? It is this taking refuge and the Ten Great Vows – which is another term [for the seven branches of worship]. If you understand this, by then you will know explicitly and clearly that, “if I now want to take this path, then the practice is taking refuge and the Ten Great Vows; the same applies to Zen meditation and chanting Buddha’s name as well.” This is very explicit and very clear. Taking refuge in two syllables is “Namo.” You can change “Namo Buddha” to “Namo Amitabha Buddha,” wouldn’t that be a better fit? Just like that. Actually, all Buddhas of the ten directions – truthfully speaking, in a broader sense – the essences of all Buddhas of the ten directions are all the same: expedient method and perfection, which are the same as perfect bliss and perfect wisdom. Perfect bliss is known as infinite-longevity, and perfect wisdom is immeasurable-light. With this understanding, then you will succeed in every endeavor. Now all the existing arguments are resolved. What is the purpose of Zen meditation? It is for this purpose [of taking refuge], too. What is the goal of studying the teachings? It is the same as well. The goal for Pure Land practice is also the same! Is there any exception? Once the principle is understood, and then you apply the corresponding sublime Dharma approach, which in fact can be different from person to person

[practice Zen or chanting Buddha's name, etc.]. Now let's continue.

[34B,19.51 (手抄稿 第五冊 p63 L4)

which are methods of training that are prerequisites for the spirit of enlightenment in the context of the practices for the person of great capacity.

This is very clear.

[34B,19.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p63 L6)]

At this point the guru thoroughly expounds the ways in which the trainings of the persons of small and medium capacities serve as components for the development of the spirit of unsurpassed enlightenment. Moreover, you, the student, reach certain knowledge of this.

So now in this context, with regard to both principles of the small and medium capacities, which are the components of the aspiration for unsurpassed Bodhichitta, this concept relies on a truly qualified teacher to expound on it skillfully. The teacher has to explain properly, and the student not only has to learn to understand, but also pay attention! The statement "reach certain knowledge of this" is more important to us than anything else. There is no need to be busily occupied with: well, I am going to practice Zen meditation! Well, I am going to chant Buddha's name! Well, I am going to do whatever! I believe that once you

thoroughly recognize the tenets, and then whichever path you take to advance, it will definitely work. Of course, for instance, those who are older practitioners, their remaining time is limited. Once they decide to study the tenets, whenever time permits they should apply their chosen practice as support. Otherwise, the proper approach [for elder practitioner] is to focus on chanting Buddha's name, this is absolutely appropriate! However, once you understand this, this is the best-supporting practice. Upon having this support, your actual rebirth will be like a tiger with wings.

[34B,21.14 (手抄稿 第五冊 p64 L2)]

So Master Yin-guang clearly explained in his writings: once you develop Bodhichitta that is like a tiger with wings, how extraordinary! And it is “like a vessel, enhanced with sulfur” (Editor’s note: this is from *Master Yin-guang’s Scriptural Collections*. With this aspiration, it is like an electrified vessel, like sulfur added to dynamite; it is very powerful and efficient.) Just like if you want to dig out a boulder, after digging for a while without any effect, light the dynamite and “bang!” The entire ground is blown open, just like that. So we talked earlier of the elderly practitioners, perhaps before they get to properly study this teaching, impermanence [death] arrives first, and whatever you have studied just serves as the supporting practice*. In fact, if you do it right, the power of the supporting practice can be much more forceful and stronger than practice during the actual session! This is the basic concept that we should recognize. Thus, after we understand this,

[*The advice is to thoroughly study Lamrim, then the supporting practices such as chanting Buddha's name or Zen meditation can become very powerful practice.]

[34B,21.49 (手抄稿 第五冊 p64 L9)]

Then, whenever you sustain a meditation, it is extremely important for you to keep this understanding in mind and train in these teachings as components for your development of the spirit of enlightenment.

So when we are ready to apply the teaching, this concept needs to be sustained, we should be mindful of it. When we are applying the teaching now, are we mindful? Yes. However, what is the level of our mindfulness now? It is mindful up to here – up to our mouths. The mindfulness that the author refers to is sustained in the mind; that is the big difference between the two. When you sustain it in your mind, right away whatever you are cultivating it will correspond with the teaching; any conforming mental activity will develop immeasurable merits; any concordant train of thought can eradicate boundless negativity. This is why, even with the five serious deeds of immediate retribution [v.1 p.389 #195] and ten nonvirtuous deeds, well, Mahayana practitioners can purify them through confession. Why? It is due to the great capacity, this we have to understand. If you don't recognize this, you certainly can't distinguish the difference between Mahayana and Theravada traditions. This concept is not covered in the

Theravada scriptures, so I just bring it up in passing here.

[34B,22.44 (手抄稿 第五冊 p65 L3)]

If you have this concept [of differentiating Mahayana and Theravada traditions], when one accidentally brings it up, if it causes an argument with a Theravada practitioner, we should not engage in contention, this is definitely true. However, we should be clear about what path we are taking. At the same time, in the future, actually we need to study all of the prerequisite foundations. Nothing can be overlooked. By then, you can compare the difference. Thus, regarding the components of the Bodhichitta, “it is extremely important for you to keep this understanding in mind.” We have to totally cherish it. We definitely should not say what we are saying now: “well, I am a Mahayana practitioner, those [Theravada] practices are not needed.” We might even consider others’ practice as going against the teaching. Those sayings are paradoxical; this is how Buddha’s teaching gets destroyed. If you lack the preceding disenchantment [of worldly enjoyment], there will never be Bodhichitta. This we have to know, it is very clear! [We may have the paradoxical thought:] “This world is filled with happiness, and you are talking about Bodhichitta to rescue others, aren’t you absurd? You rescued me apparently for a good cause, yet you stop me from enjoyment, are you kidding me? Nevertheless, you claim to rescue me!” So this concept [of Bodhichitta requires to study systematically] is very explicit and very clear, it does not need further explanation. Even for the most obvious and

simple worldly logic, we can understand by explaining it once. However, the Buddha Dharma practitioner surprisingly cannot figure this out, and that is ridiculous.

[34B,24.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p65 L13)]

English LR v.1 p. 135-136

Otherwise, the path of the person of great capacity and the paths of the persons of small and medium capacities would be separate and unrelated.

If you lack this recognition, you will feel that the following section is unrelated to the great capacity. They are independent and irrelevant! At this time, what is the flaw? The flaw is a major one, major and very serious!

[34B,24.22 (手抄稿 第五冊 p66 L2)]

English LR v.1 p. 136

And since you do not attain any certain knowledge of the spirit of enlightenment until you reach the actual path of the person of great capacity, your lack of training in these topics as components of your development of the spirit of enlightenment would either prevent you from developing that spirit,

Because you have erroneous recognition – feeling that [small and medium capacities] do not correspond to great capacity, so you don't want to pursue them. Since you don't want to pursue them, may I ask: without the foundation, how can you successfully cultivate

Bodhichitta? Because of this misunderstanding, you are unable to develop actual Bodhichitta. Thus, the author says here, it turns into an obstacle – you are not able to develop the spirit of enlightenment, this concept is very clear. So these statements, “not attain any certain knowledge of the spirit of enlightenment until you reach the actual path of the person of great capacity” means that, because you are not there yet, once you have reached that point, of course, this misunderstanding will not be there. If you are not there yet, but have this erroneous concept, as far as this Bodhichitta goes, it will turn into the biggest obstacle. You may say, “Well, I don’t need to practice the foundation, don’t need to train in it!” You forsake it, and you end up letting go of the most precise guidance. May I ask, what will your cultivation lead to?

[34B,25.30 (手抄稿 第五冊 p66 L10)]

or, while you lack this training, cause you to deviate from your great purpose of developing that spirit. Therefore, pay close attention to this point.

This attitude will cause you to deviate from great benefit, so you must meditate earnestly. The practice now is to develop an uncontrived understanding. Pay attention! To develop uncontrived understanding does not mean to achieve it right away. Once you have an uncontrived understanding, your mind will not fluctuate. Otherwise, we will, “Think about this monastery ... then go to another monastery and it seems pretty good, come here and think that the other monastery is good; so our

running around and fluttering about amount to nothing.” Just drift like this, many lifetimes and many eons pass by. This is a very great loss, a major loss! However, this is not saying that everything is totally in vain – one can still plant some virtuous roots! One will plant virtuous roots here and there, once enough have been planted, all of a sudden, a sprout will develop adventitiously. That is when arhatship is achieved. After that, [we will not be in a hurry to achieve Buddhahood because our own liberation is achieved] again advancing gradually, this is an absolute fact. Hence, the opportunity to take the direct route is less possible; this is what we need to understand.

[34B,26.29 (手抄稿 第五冊 p67 L5)]

In this way, train in the paths of persons of small and medium capacities and train well in what is explained in the context of the person of great capacity. Then, to the best of your ability, develop an uncontrived spirit of enlightenment in your mind-stream.

First, according to the above explanation, it begins with the small capacity and then medium capacity, train well in them. And continuing on is the great capacity. Abide by these steps to practice, to enable our mental stream to sincerely cultivate in this supreme Bodhichitta. Now we have heard and understood this term. Furthermore, we understand the essential meaning and apply accordingly. Once we applied, the actual mental correspondence will arise. What do we do after it arises?

[34B,27.22 (手抄稿 第五冊 p67 L10)]

Next, in order to stabilize this spirit, make a special practice of refuge and then perform the rite of the aspirational spirit of enlightenment. After you have adopted this aspirational spirit through the rite, you must strive to learn its precepts.

Furthermore, by the time your aspiration is developed, then in order to stabilize it, what is this “stabilize” situation? You are endowed with it at initial cultivation but after that, when you encounter other conditions, it will fade. It is like for instance, now we say, “Well, this teaching is great!” You take a look and strive at it. After the class or while engaging in other tasks – once you are occupied and forget about it – this is not the sign of stabilization. If this arising condition happens to cause obstruction, you may even retreat from it. So, at this juncture, uncontrived faith is very hard to develop, yet you still need to stabilize it. This stabilization has to be uncontrived. Thus, for the sake of stabilizing it, that is the time to study the unshared refuge. In the beginning, one takes refuge [in v.1 chapter 12]. However, the refuge that is taken later [in v.2 chapter 5 p.68] is only the specific Mahayana rite of taking refuge – this latter one is different. And it is followed by the “ritual for adopting the spirit of enlightenment.” This is the time of, “I now want to adopt the spirit of enlightenment”. “After you have adopted this aspirational spirit through the rite,” upon taking this rite, then what? Followed by the proper study. Study what? Study the Bodhisattva deeds. One “must strive to learn its precepts,” the actual practice for Bodhisattva is the Bodhisattva vows, strive

at it. With this aspiration, further advance to take the unshared refuge, and then follow with the adoption of the spirit of enlightenment and studying the Bodhisattva vows. “Then,” pay attention!

[34B,28.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p68 L9)]

Then, develop a great yearning to learn the bodhisattva deeds, such as the six perfections and the four ways of gathering disciples.

At this time, again one has to reinforce this yearning! Thus, this aspiration is stabilized, and then you further understand that in order to fulfill this Bodhisattva aspiration – if you have the aspiration and plan to fulfill it, you still need to apply Bodhisattva deeds. To apply Bodhisattva deeds is to practice the six perfections. So this study is to learn the six perfections, four ways to gather disciples, Bodhisattva deeds, etc.

[35A,00.13 (手抄稿 第五冊 p71 L1)]

Once this yearning arises from the depths of your heart, decisively take up the pure vow of the engaged spirit of enlightenment.

These steps are very clear; so for every aspect there is a next one, one after another, and another. By then, after you have gone through this practice sequentially, you will mindfully feel: well, now is the time to study this certain practice. This study here does not mean that we sit here and listen to the concept or talk

about the perception. By then, when others come to request something from you, “Well, certainly! I will give it to him right away.” Although there may be some resistance within you, “Well, no, no, no I have to give to him!” That is how the practice goes. And then when others scold you, “Well, I will apply patience.” When facing challenge, “I will abide by ethical discipline.” This is the situation. If this place is not to your taste, “Right, ethical discipline teaches me that I have to practice forbearance.” And this is when you are truly cultivating; it is not just following the words literally. So “yearning arises from the depths of your heart.” What should be done at that time? “Decisively take up the pure vow of the engaged spirit of enlightenment,” to take the Bodhisattva vows! This is the actual action of taking up the vow of the Bodhisattva deeds! When applying the Bodhisattva vows, this is considered the beginning of what? It is the action, the deed to engage in it. And after applying the Bodhisattva vows,

[35A,01.19 (手抄稿 第五冊 p72 L2)]

Then, at the risk of your life, avoid being polluted by the root infractions. Strive not to be soiled by even small and medium contaminations or by the creation of faults.

Once you have taken these Bodhisattva vows, at the risk of your life, absolutely do not commit the root infractions not even a speck of it. Other “small and medium contaminations or by the creation of faults” also require your effort not to transgress.

[35A,01.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p72 L5)]

Even if you are soiled, thoroughly purify yourself by repairing the infractions just as is taught in scripture.

But, when we develop this aspiration in the beginning, due to the afflictions are still there, inevitably there are moments where we are not careful, lax, not mindful or laden with afflictions, and we relapse again. So what should be done at that time? Immediately follow the rites to repent and apply remedies.

[35A,02.05 (手抄稿 第五冊 p72 L9)]

Here, with the aspiration and the engaged spirit of enlightenment, their sequential rank in the Mahayana tradition is very clear. In the beginning, from small to medium capacity, up to developing this aspiration of the spirit of enlightenment, that is called the minimum rank of the path-of-accumulation. It is known as the basic level of the path-of-accumulation. And after you have this basic level of path-of-accumulation, you aspire to apply the six perfections mindfully and you take the initial vow for engaging in Bodhisattva deeds, that is the medium rank of the path-of-accumulation. For the practitioners of the basic rank, if you dedicate for a better rebirth, upon being reborn to Pure Land it is considered the superior rank, at the very least. The minimum rank of the path-of-accumulation practitioner is dedicated to this aspiration to be reborn to Pure Land, which is their highest rank, just like that. You can look

into it for yourselves, what is the qualification to be reborn to the superior rank of Pure Land? It is the aspiration for the spirit of enlightenment, right? It is this aspiration for Bodhichitta, nothing else – the ranking of this rebirth is superior. If you aspire for Bodhichitta, with some extra effort one can reach the middle rank, this is how it works! This is the content of the text here. Thus, it is absolutely true: once you understand this aspect and practice accordingly, reaching a superior rank is actually not difficult.

[35A,03.19 (手抄稿 第五冊 p73 L3)]

Let me recall how many years has it been, maybe it was eight or nine years ago, I don't quite remember. Back when I was in America and met a teacher, he also taught me this same concept. Afterward, he further showed me a chart for the rites of meditation. I asked him then, "Sigh, to study it, it is always hard in our imagination." He told me that from his teacher's personal guidance to him, that learning it from the very first step to completion should take two years. He is a reincarnated being. For us to learn this, according to him, probably multiply that a few times will do. Now that I know, if you earnestly strive at it, it can be achieved in ten years. *Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's Sutra for Discernment of the Consequences of Wholesome and Unwholesome Karma* tells us: even for your most severe infractions, as long as you strive at it with "the effort of repenting it in one thousand days," you will definitely purify them, right? It is very simple. After repenting, you will reach a very high level of attainment. By then, if you want to practice meditative serenity, it will be very easy,

and this is absolutely true. So this is not just mere talk, it is clearly recorded in the scriptures. Now, the most important thing for us: prior to receiving the proper teachings in their entirety, even before attaining the correct views, we are yet to study them, but we already beat the drum of retreat. Alas, knowing this is extremely hard to encounter! Yet, you are not aspired to learn – you refrain from learning it. If you have not studied the content, how do you know how to go about it? Of course, there is only one path – there is no other choice! In other words, this is the only path. This is why our current attitude is very pathetic. So here what the text states is for us to apply accordingly.

[35A,04.53 (手抄稿 第五冊 p74 L1)]

Next, train broadly in the six perfections.

That will be when we study the six perfections! Specifically, study this topic. So the differentiation of the teachings in our Tian-tai school, the so-called application based on availability, so on and so forth – I am not familiar with how they differentiate. This we should know, what are all these rankings? In Tian-tai lineage, or how we now refer to them as the Bodhisattvas at the level of faith. The Bodhisattvas at the level of faith are included in [the application of the six perfections].

[35A,05.24 (手抄稿 第五冊 p74 L5)]

In particular, train well in meditative stabilization—the heart of meditative serenity—in order to make your mind capable of being set on a virtuous object of meditation, according to your wish.

So within the six perfections, especially because we want to sincerely abide by this “virtuous object of meditation” – this mindset is focused on cultivating virtue, then it has to be imbued with the power of meditative serenity and wisdom. So, primarily, the six perfections are for accumulating merits, and what one should actually train well is the meditative stabilization.

[35A,05.57 (手抄稿 第五冊 p74 L9)]

The Elder’s *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* says that you should develop meditative serenity for the sake of producing the superknowledges. He is simply giving an example. In other contexts he says that you should develop serenity for the sake of producing insight. Therefore, achieve serenity mainly for the purpose of insight.

Although you want to cultivate all sorts of virtues, learn meditative stabilization, as well as recognize the characteristics of Buddha Dharma, generate the aspiration for the spirit of enlightenment, and perfect it. This still relies on truly perceiving the wisdom of emptiness, which is the reference to the term “insight” here. So you need to further advance to learn insight.

The explanation below: why is it explained in this way? Because this text is based on the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, and which talks about the stages step by step. In the end, it says that, in order to produce the superknowledge, meditative serenity is required. The actual purpose is not to attain the superknowledge, it is [to achieve meditative stabilization for the purpose of obtaining insight]. Hence, I make this clarification here. Next,

[35A,06.53 (手抄稿 第五冊 p75 L4)]

Then, in order to cut the bonds of the conception of the two selves, make a philosophical determination of the meaning of emptiness, which is selflessness.

Up to this point, we have discussed that the development of conventional Bodhichitta is to accumulate merits. Thus, what is required for one to perfect this conventional spirit of enlightenment and to achieve the enlightened effect? It requires great wisdom and the experiential knowledge of the true nature of reality, which, in other words, is “wisdom of emptiness.” Once you have the aspiration of the supreme spirit of enlightenment and take the Bodhisattva vows, accumulated merits, the next step is to attain the ultimate spirit of enlightenment, and sublime wisdom of emptiness. The exact moment before one attains the ultimate Bodhichitta is the path-of-seeing, which is the entry-level Bodhisattva. So what are the prerequisites? All these are required, that is the juncture for one to cut the bonds of the conception of the two selves of the person and phenomena. To truly remove these [two

selves], there must be a correct and skillful method. So what should be done at this time? One needs to “make a philosophical determination of the meaning of emptiness, which is selflessness.” So first we need to understand these two bonds. This “self” actually does not exist intrinsically; this is what one should rationalize first. And then,

[35A,08.19 (手抄稿 第五冊 p75 L12)]

After sustaining an unmistakable method of meditation, achieve insight, the heart of wisdom.

Thus, upon gaining this understanding, apply it accordingly in your practice. So earlier in the text, every aspect is about “study and contemplation.” Abide by the wisdom arose from contemplation in practice, and then the wisdom arising from meditation will become available. So now what is the content of your application? It is insight – the wisdom of emptiness. When you achieve the actual experiential knowledge of the emptiness of selflessness, which is considered an entry-level Bodhisattva, and that is the beginning of the ultimate spirit of enlightenment.

[35A,08.58 (手抄稿 第五冊 p76 L3)]

English LR v.1 p.136-137

Accordingly, Atisha’s *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the “Lamp for the Path”* states that, except for the practices of serenity and insight, all the practices up to and including the training in the

precepts of the vow of the engaged_spirit of enlightenment constitute the training in ethical discipline. Serenity is the training in concentration or mind. Insight is the training in wisdom.

So let's review the division again and reflect on it, normally we refer to the aforementioned practice as ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom. They are known as the six perfections in Mahayana practice. Actually, they are just grouped differently with different labels. The overall summation is no other than these three precious trainings of: ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom. So it is to say that the practices up to and including the training in the precepts are: generosity, ethical discipline, patience, joyous perseverance, and so forth. They are categorized under ethical discipline. Meditative serenity is Samadhi, also known as mind training or concentration. Insight is the training in wisdom. In short, it is the three precious trainings of ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom.

[35A,09.45 (手抄稿 第五冊 p76 L9)]

English LR v.1 p.137

Furthermore, all the practices up to and including meditative serenity constitute the factor of enlightenment called either method, the collection of merit, the paths that depend on conventional truths, or the stages of the vast path.

So there is another way to divide it, the method starts from the training of meditative serenity and on, it is

known as the expedient means, and it is to collect blissful merits. What does this rely on? It relies on the path of conventional truth, which is the path of extensive deeds.

[35A,10.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p76 L12)]

The development of the three kinds of special wisdom constitutes the factor of enlightenment called wisdom, the collection of wisdom, that which depends on ultimate truths, or the stages of the profound path.

Furthermore, what is this development of our “special wisdom?” It is study, contemplation, and wisdom. This is categorized as the perfection of wisdom, and this is the merit of wisdom. What does this wisdom merit rely on? It relies on the ultimate truth, the profound view path. Usually, we refer to them as: this is extensive deed and that is the profound view, this is the deed of wisdom, and that one is the act of blissfulness. So these are at causal stages. What about at the effect stage? When both are fulfilled, one will be endowed with both bliss and wisdom, and that is Buddha!

[35A,10.47 (手抄稿 第五冊 p77 L4)]

Therefore, be very certain about their order, the fact that they are a comprehensive list, and the fact that you do not achieve enlightenment by either method or wisdom alone.

As for the above “certain order,” within it, we need to understand that “a comprehensive list” includes quality and quantity. The quality, quantity, and systematic order have to be explicit and clear, practicing wisdom alone will not achieve it. This complete concept requires “thorough comprehension!” Usually, we say comprehension, comprehension, now the text enhances it with thorough comprehension! This certainly requires studying the supreme spirit of enlightenment; this concept is very important, very crucial.

[35A,11.27 (手抄稿 第五冊 p77 L9)]

Therefore, there is a specific reason in this mentioning of the thorough comprehension, and that is not for us to take off on the application immediately. It is for us to precisely recognize the outline of the overall path with thorough and absolutely unshakable understanding. Moreover, because of your recognition, next, you will be able to engage in it. At that time, it will conform to you for a deeper study. That will be when you can delve deeper in your study, thus further study is possible! This concept is very explicit. Often we talk about going for a deep dive or going further into it, yet we stop right at the entrance and think of it as doing a deep dive. Actually, that is not it, not there yet, no advancement at all, how can there be depth? Just like that.

[35A,12.12 (手抄稿 第五冊 p78 L1)]

However, we should not neglect the above! Generally speaking, because we have faith in meeting Amitabha Buddha and he will definitely teach us everything, this concept is flawless. What is the fault? It is the aforementioned, once you get to the Pure Land, you still need to learn from Amitabha Buddha. So do not reject the training at this causal stage. If you reject the practice, when the time comes the seeds of rejection will still be there! They are not removed. This is the key concept, which has been discussed before and will be mentioned again later.

[35A,12.43 (手抄稿 第五冊 p78 L6)]

English LR v.1 p.137

This is how the royal geese, the conquerors' children, who are on their way to the great ocean of a buddha's good qualities, spread their two wings and fly. One wing is conventional truths—all of the factors of method, the vast path. The other wing, which depends on ultimate truths, is knowing well both reality and selflessness.

Well, this is to say that we now understand, to reach to the other shore of the Great Ocean of all Buddha's good qualities, who can achieve this? "The conqueror's children." And then, what is in the future? The conqueror's children will have complete achievement in the future; the "royal geese" represent Buddha. You plan to take this path, so what should you do? Both wings

need to be wide open at the causal stage. One wing is the extensive and flawless completion of the conventional truth, which is the perfection of high-status and the completion of your enlightened physical form. Moreover, what guarantees your substantial causes, what else is required? It still requires this true meaning of selflessness, the wisdom of emptiness. Thus, to perfect an enlightened physical form, you need to rely on the wisdom of emptiness. Conversely, the nature of the wisdom of emptiness is the enlightened mind. So to perfect the enlightened mind, you also should rely on this conventional truth. These two are reciprocal causes and effects and they complement each other. Thus, one is able to go beyond this Great Ocean of Buddha Dharma, instead of,

[35A,14.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p79 L1)]

However, they do not take up only a single part of the path, or fly like a bird with a broken wing.

If taking only a single part of the path, it would be like only having one wing, where achieving the goal is impossible.

[35A,14.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p79 L3)]

As Candrakirti's *Commentary on the "Middle Way"* states:

Spreading the broad, white wings of reality and conventionality,

**The royal geese, escorted by the flock of living beings,
Fly on the winds of virtue to supremacy
On the far shore of a buddha's ocean-like qualities.**

This royal goose guides all living beings spreading what to advance? Spreading both wings, where one is the ultimate truth and the other is conventional truth. Ultimate truth is the white aspect, and conventional truth is the broad aspect. "White" represents purity and completeness; "broad" means it is all-inclusive. Once these are perfected, then to "fly on the winds of virtue" is to skillfully apply the practice and reach the shore of all Buddhas' good qualities. This is the pinnacle. This is quoted from the above commentary.

[35A,14.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p79 L9)]

After you have trained your mind by means of the ordinary path, you must certainly enter the mantra path

Well, you rely on the prerequisite shared path, which is truly having "trained your mind by means of the ordinary path!" We should have this recognition of the shared path if we are aspired to apply the Tantric practices. Conversely, by the same token, once you reach a certain level of the Tantric principle, may I ask, what is that level? If you earnestly abide by the preceding teachings, your rebirth will be a higher rank. What is the qualification of a higher rank rebirth? Well! It

is the aspiration of ultimate Bodhichitta, just like that! So to sincerely apply Tantric practice, take a look at our current situation, “Wow, I received an initiation, and I am cultivating Tantra practice.”* Sigh! Such attitude is totally out of it. By the time you have accrued the qualification, then you can study the Tantra practice. So in general, a Bodhisattva of the eighth level usually is said to be studying the Tantra practice. Some special cases can start to learn from the entry-level Bodhisattva, and the progress should be fast. This is why I mentioned that Youthful Sudhana achieved it in one lifetime. Well, he should be a good example. This concept is very explicit and very clear here.

[*The mantra path is also referred to as the “tantra path,” “Tantrayana,” “Mantrayana,” and “Vajrayana.”]

[35A,16.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p80 L5)]

So the shared path that was mentioned earlier would have been considered the shared path at that time. The great capacity is also shared, why? The initial great capacity was unique in the Mahayana; however, both Sutrayana and Tantrayana practitioners must take this unshared great capacity. But Sutrayana only goes up to [the fulfillment of the shared great scope] and not further into the [Tantra practice]. So this part of [the great capacity in the Sutrayana] is also shared with Tantrayana practitioners. Only by reaching that level of Sutrayana practice then you are ready for Tantra practice. Why?

[35A,16.36 (手抄稿 第五冊 p80 L9)]

because, when you do, you will quickly complete the two collections.

Because when you enter the Tantra path, both blissful and wisdom merits can be quickly achieved. So the reason that Sutrayana takes up to two great eons, and Tantrayana makes it possible to become enlightened in one lifetime, this is where the actual concept lies. Once you have this precise and complete recognition, then you will not doubt it. Otherwise, you will definitely have doubts: well, we ordinary and confused people, by carelessly chanting a few mantras, how is achievement in one lifetime possible? Needless to say about this misconception in Sutrayana, even in Tantrayana there is no such expression, this we have to be clear.

[35A,17.10 (手抄稿 第五冊 p81 L1)]

If you cannot practice more than just the ordinary path, or do not want to do it because your inclination inherited from former lives is too weak, then just improve on these very stages of the path.

This is saying that if you cannot practice more than this, “more than” what? When it is more than the shared path mentioned earlier, it is beyond our ability, or we don’t want to study, or due to our propensity or our incapacity. The propensity is a personal habit – many people dislike this practice, which nothing can be done

about it. Also, there are various other capability issues, thus one is reluctant to take the path. By then, it is fine, just take the Sutrayana practice slowly, and follow the stepwise systematic order one step at a time! Just like this. So this is about the shared Mahayana path. Furthermore, what else is required to advance on the Tantrayana path?

[35A,17.55 (手抄稿 第五冊 p81 L7)]

It is taught in all the vehicles in general and in the mantra vehicle in particular that reliance on the teacher is very crucial. Consequently, once you enter the mantra path, you should follow the mantra explanations, and practice a method of relying on the teacher that is even more specialized than what I have explained before.

If we want to properly study Tantra practice, the concept of “reliance on the teacher” is emphasized much more than before, it is more specialized and more sublime. Because in the Tantric teachings they particularly emphasize this point, it is the most important, the most crucial training! What we have discussed earlier on this topic, in general, they are very important, especially so in Tantric teachings. As for this concept, I plan to finish discussing this text then I will expound [Tantric teaching] in great detail to you all, they will be discussed in full detail. As for now, I just mention it briefly.

[35A,18.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p81 L14)]

In general, there are several conditions for us now: one type is practicing Buddha Dharma and totally doesn't recognize the necessity of virtuous teachers, ah! It is absolutely and extremely absurd. Later, after we have studied, ah! The virtuous teacher is so important and gradually you rely on the teacher for everything. This is flawed again. So in the earlier section, the author told us about the attitude like a dutiful child. There is nothing wrong with it, but it was followed by a statement, remember? Only in front of a fully qualified teacher can you let the teacher lead you by the nose, do you still remember this? So what is the requirement for the disciple? Other than being nonpartisan, intelligence is required; other than intelligence, one still needs to strive diligently; other than striving diligently, one still needs veneration. Within all these, intelligence is very important; you should be able to distinguish whether this teacher is truly a qualified virtuous one. This recognition is not easy, like that. Once you have this discernment, by then you can let him lead you by the nose and that will not be flawed.

[35A,19.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p82 L8)]

Last night, we talked about the case – when you properly follow the virtuous teacher, why is it that, with two practitioners, one studies by himself, and the other one who follows the virtuous teacher seems to surpass the one who studies on his own, why? Now we should be able to comprehend it. Today I will repeat it again. The reason is just this simple, because my usual way of

cultivation means what? It means I am an ordinary being, isn't it clear? The first qualification to cultivate Buddha Dharma is the correct view. With the view of an ordinary being, even one has experienced some teaching, when affliction arises this experience becomes obscured. Even if you have the correct view, it may not be thorough! You can rely on the virtuous teacher and rely on his vision, wouldn't that be your best guide for cultivating the teaching? Isn't this very explicit? So, nowadays, many of us practitioners, sigh, lock ourselves up for self-study, totally not realizing that we are having nightmares while submerged in the den of ignorance! We are completely unaware of it. This is absolutely the fact!

[35A,20.38 (手抄稿 第五冊 p82 L15)]

However, remember these qualifications! You have to clearly recognize the qualifications of a virtuous teacher. If you let someone who is not qualified as a virtuous teacher to lead you by the nose, then it is too bad. "When the blind leads the blind, they accompany each other into the pit of fire." So for a true Tantra practitioner, the qualifications are very strict! You can imagine, is there anything unknown to a first level Bodhisattva? But, on the contrary, even a first level Bodhisattva relies on virtuous teachers; you can imagine the reasoning behind it. On the other hand, it is also very simple! For an entry-level Bodhisattva to achieve Buddhahood, it takes two great eons. But if you can complete the training, you don't need further meditation practice. Thus, entry-level Bodhisattvas still rely on virtuous teachers. Whereas we ordinary beings now,

surprisingly we claim that we don't need this reliance. May I ask, how do you practice? This is the first point.

[35A,21.18 (手抄稿 第五冊 p83 L6)]

What about the second point? It is for us to further understand that when our thoughts arise, what are we usually in the midst of? We are filled with afflictions and grasping on our views, so when you feel you are right, but actually, you are far from being right. Everyone reflects on it, isn't this the case? With this attitude, the more Lamrim understanding you have, your understanding will become more clear and obvious. The greatness of Lamrim – actually not necessarily Lamrim alone, regardless of whether you read the *Levels of Yogic Deeds*, the *Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*, no matter which great scripture, they explain it very clearly. However, it is too bad that most of these manuscripts are about 100 scrolls. Here in the Chinese Lamrim, there are about 20-some scrolls. Besides some people will say, “Well, this text is really hard to understand!” That is because you did not look at it closely enough. If you review it again, I believe you will eventually discover that this Lamrim actually is the easiest one to understand [out of all other commentaries]. You might try looking at the *Levels of Yogic Deeds*, how many of you can understand it? If you can understand either the *Levels of Yogic Deeds* or the *Treasury of Knowledge*, I praise you! As for the *Ornament for Clear Knowledge* and *Compendium of Valid Cognition*, you basically can't even dream about it, that is it! This is definitely true. So how can we understand the actual Dharma characteristics!

Therefore, once you truly understand the above, then these concepts will be very explicit, very clear, that is how it works.

[35A,22.29 (手抄稿 第五冊 p84 L2)]

So here the author tells us, why is it that a genuine Tantra practice emphasizes this concept so much? That is because it directly leads to the effect stage! It enables you to achieve in one lifetime. So if you truly want to have the quickest, most excellent, and best achievement, then the virtuous teacher is absolutely necessary. So the manifestation of Youthful Sudhana is very clear, and the comparison between the naga daughter*, Sariputra, and Mahakasyapa, the contrast is right there, very clear. You can make your own decision, decide the path for yourself; this is totally up to us! Whichever you prefer does not matter, either one is correct. Be clear about all the factors, and then make a decision.

[*Lotus Sutra, Chapter 12 Devadatta – the story of the 8-year old naga daughter’s transformation. In contrast to Sariputra and Mahakasyapa took longer time to achieve their ultimate enlightenment.]

[35A,23.07 (手抄稿 第五冊 p84 L7)]

Now, here we may ask, well, what about Tantra practice? To actually advance in Tantra practice, that is when one needs to start all over to look for a virtuous teacher! Although there are preceding teachers, and that is why when Youthful Sudhana advanced with the

fulfillment of the ten stages of faith, well, there comes Manjusri Bodhisattva to tell him, “Next, you need to look for virtuous teachers.” There are many special meanings in this guidance! I will briefly go over it. For now we always think that it is difficult to find a virtuous teacher, but actually, it is not about how difficult it is to find virtuous teachers, it is that one is rarely endowed with the qualities as a suitable disciple! Once you become endowed with the characteristics of a disciple, as long as we are qualified, there is no need to search; Manjusri Bodhisattva will come to look for us. By the time you reach the level of Youthful Sudhana, then Manjusri Bodhisattva will also come to tell you, “So and so, this is what you should do now.” Well, the *Array of Stalks Sutra* explains it very clearly; do you still not believe it? So here, this is why I encourage everyone not to find fault in others to begin with. If you do not purify this karmic obstacle, you basically are not qualified to talk about whether or not you can remove the karmic obstacle. With the proper collection of merits, a virtuous teacher will come to look for you, is this right? It is clearly and explicitly explained in the scriptures, just like that.

[35A,24.16 (手抄稿 第五冊 p85 L2)]

Thus, now, for those around us, they may be an ordinary being yet they are our virtuous teachers. Why? It is an opportunity for us to practice in front of this ordinary being. Through your practice, you perfect your generosity, ethical discipline, and patience, and even cultivate your attitude for veneration. Well, those who have helped you to foster all these are at the same time helping you to achieve Buddhahood. Aren't they virtuous

teachers? This is very explicit! Just like when we do business now, you may dislike poor people. If it were not for them, your business would not succeed! If you open up a shop, if they don't buy from you, your business will not work out! Isn't this very obvious? Now, for those of us who are sincere about applying Buddha Dharma, we even have these flawed concepts, truly what a pity, this is actually very pathetic! So the most important thing is when you have acquired the correct view, all these practices become easy. So when we recite the Bodhisattva vows, alas, to refrain from speaking of others' faults, it is so difficult ... slandering the four types of followers [monks, nuns, male and female lay practitioners] seems to be very easy to commit. Once you truly have the above understanding, then upholding the vows is very easy. Needless to say that you will not find faults in the four types of followers, even when seeing a very common, un-presentable person, you will commiserate and sympathize him. You need to respect him the same way you would pay respect to a Bodhisattva, this is very clear. Because you understand this clearly: by respecting him the benefit is yours in the end! He went through all these sufferings to make you a Buddha, how can you not be grateful to him? Well, now let's continue.

[35A,25.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p85 L13)]

Then, ripen your mind with initiations that come from pure tantric sources,

Once you have found a virtuous teacher, at that time he will give you the initiation. What are the

qualifications for initiation? The source has to be from pure tantric lineages. These words, “from pure tantric sources,” include two things, and both are required: first, the person who gives you the initiation and secondly the content of the initiation. This is how a genuine perfect lineage should be. So at the beginning of this Lamrim, it first covers the greatness of the author and then the greatness of the teaching. What advantage does this arrangement have? It will guide you to attain the genuine essence. At the present moment, we sit here; use our hand to flip the light switch, oh! The light is on, and the darkness is gone. And by flipping the switch, the fan is on and heat is removed. Just by flipping the switch and it is on. It is this simple! Certainly, so simple, however, what are the required conditions? You have to be prepared within one aspect after another and connect to the high voltage line for a powerful boost. You better not think that this connection is very easy, if you try to connect it to a pile of scrap metal, such connection is totally useless. This is very obvious and explicit. The contents of the source must be pure and concordant, which is “from pure tantric sources.” So the person giving us the initiation definitely has to be qualified. Actually, it is not until then you will be able to have a true understanding of the tantric teaching - in the tantric teaching the guru is the manifestation of the Buddha as an ordinary being. This is why, when you serve a tantric teacher, it will produce the greatest accumulation of merits and purify all negativities.

[35A,27.36 (手抄稿 第五冊 p86 L12)]

Last night we already discussed it, and today I will repeat it again: generally, when we present our offering, with our minds as ordinary beings, it depends on the subject we are offering to. Because we can't generate a mind that concords with omniscience, if your conformity to omniscience arises, when you take any random worthless item, ah! With a so-called \$1 offering, you will produce immeasurable merits. And then when we offer to a Buddha, or a dog, the merit is incredible, and that is because of your conformity to omniscience. Can we achieve it? Probably not, that is because we are "ordinary beings." It is exactly because we are ordinary beings that we have to purify negativities and accumulate merits. By then, it all relies on the recipient of the offering; you definitely are not able to offer to all three billion-world systems. How can we have this kind of capacity? So we only can afford whatever is readily available. At that time, the higher the achievement of the being you are offering to, the more merits you will receive. With the Buddha statue we are seeing now, what is it? It is Nirmanakaya [the incarnation form of Buddha]. But the true tantric virtuous teacher manifests as an ordinary being, which is Sambhogakaya [the blissful form of Buddha]. Naturally, the latter has greater merits!

[35A,28.35 (手抄稿 第五冊 p87 L5)]

For this, I can also give a simple example. It is like if we work as a servant, and we just serve the master. What is the condition of the Nirmanakaya? For instance, now we have the president here, and the president also has a servant at home. This servant will serve as well,

but what is that? The service provided is at home - serving the president at home. And another one is the government assistant at the president's office; such an assistant at the president's office can be referred to as the chief of staff of the president's office. May I ask, does the servant at home have more power or does the chief of staff? Wow, the chief of staff has as much power as the minister, the minister even has to bow to him! If you refer to a housekeeper at home, from others' point of view, that helper is just a servant. This is very clear, right? Do you understand?

[35B,00.16 (手抄稿 第五冊 p89 L1)]

I am trying to apply practical reasoning at every possible opportunity to explain to you, like that. Hope you can understand when such an explanation happens. Here I am not encouraging you to study Tantra practice, no, not yet! Well, the contemporary Tantra teaching is in disorder and there is a lot of confusion. Not everyone understands the Tantra teaching, yet when one tries to engage in it, most likely mishaps will happen. I am specifically clarifying it here, once we recognize the reasoning, we will steadily consider: "For now, safely taking my path, well, whether it is upholding the precepts or reciting Buddha's name, these are certainly the best strategies." However, definitely do not randomly slander those Tantra practitioners who are willing to take on such a practice, I would praise them very much. If one has the willpower to take it on, that is very good. But before having an understanding of the external condition, never make rash criticisms. This is one thing

that is extremely important to us. How do you know what this practitioner's actual spiritual identity is?

[35B,01.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p89 L8)]

Conversely, the reason some people will try to imitate [an authentic Tantra practitioner], why do they want to imitate? Because Tantra practice is great! For an imposter, he would never want to imitate a thief, why? The thief is worthless! I also don't want to pretend to be a bandit. My imitation would be: if I were to be an imposter, ah, I would imitate a high-level government official. This means that the government official is very worthy! So why does the imitator want to pretend to be a great guru, it means that there is an advantage to being a great guru, right? In this circumstance, some are real guru and some are faking, you can't tell them apart. If you randomly reject them, then you are really harming yourself! Think about this concept, is it right? So in fact, we don't even need to talk about Buddha Dharma, science is the same – authentic scientists can only say: "For me, I only understand what I know now, for those things that I am not seeing I can't refute them." This is the proper attitude, so true worldly sages would say: "admitting what you know and what you don't know." What we don't know is foreign to us. This is the most precise attitude in learning the Buddha Dharma. I just mention this in passing.

[35B,02.05 (手抄稿 第五冊 p90 L8)]

So the aforementioned “initiation”, well, that is to mature our mental continuum, to bring our mindstream to its maturation. Upon receiving the initiation, one can plant the actual seeds of the three karmic doors – body, speech, and mind – to achieve the effect stage Buddhahood in your mental stream. As long as you apply it accordingly, you will immediately notice the effect. Like what was mentioned earlier, to connect a power cord, as long as you are internally ready, the light will turn on right away. Honestly speaking, for you to actually generate electricity, none of us has this ability. Needless to say, a nuclear power plant would cost several billion dollars; it’s just not possible. For you to buy a nuclear power plant average people like us can’t afford it, this is definitely true, right? So, this is why Tantric teachings totally rely on this – the empowerment of the lineage from Buddhas of all ten directions.

[35B,02.58 (手抄稿 第五冊 p90 L15)]

Up to this point, I will bring one minor thing up in passing: now we say that we don’t have the opportunity to receive the initiations and blessings from the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, right? Why not? Actually, they are readily available from the very first step we are taking now, what is it? That is [we monastics] becoming ordained. This is where the laudability of precepts lies! Does everyone understand what a precept is? It represents the purified symbol of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and, certainly, Buddha is the only one who can stipulate these precepts. Nowadays, people are way too smart to claiming: “This precept is established during Buddha’s time, now the times are different, you

don't need to abide by it!" Does it make sense? It does have its reasoning, for Buddha actually established the precepts according to the time and place. However, what is the special characteristic behind it? It has the essence of all Buddhas of the ten directions within it. Just like the example of connecting the power cord, once connected to a room with a 100-watt light bulb, the light will only be as bright as 100 watts. If the room has a motor, the light can only shine on the motor. However, this electricity definitely has this great effect. If you can understand this concept, respect the precepts with one-pointed veneration; you should be able to receive the blessings in their entirety. This effect is inconceivable.

[35B,04.07 (手抄稿 第五冊 p91 L9)]

So now, with our understanding of this concept, the proper attitude should be: "I am an ignorant ordinary being, because of the maturation of the force of my karma now, I am not able to achieve [to be connected with the guru's mental stream through the blessing of initiation]. Yet, I have great respect, if I am unable to make it happen, I will repent wholeheartedly." If you have this attitude, it will become very easy when you gain the ability in the future. Well, when your ability has increased however much, the same proportion of the blessing will arise, and you will very quickly attain this effect. Do not get too clever, "well, this [status quo] is how it should be!" That is a great loss for us. This is the true meaning regarding the initiation. So once you have attained the essence of the precepts, when we are going through the initiation: "Ah! I am taking the vows now!" One should take it with this kind of earnest

attitude. Especially for the Nan-shan Dao-xuan Precept Master, he was truly remarkable! This has always been emphasized in the northern lineage. Speaking of this northern branch, it is very precious, extraordinarily valuable. Why? It reveals the specific characteristic [of precepts] to us. In the future, when we discuss precepts, we have to understand it. So, is the southern lineage good? It is good, definitely good, we should never neglect them, and their practices are very excellent. However, as for the characteristics of northern lineage, we shouldn't ... pay attention [both north – Tibet, China; and south -Thailand, Sri Lanka lineages should be respected], this concept is very important, very crucial!

[35B,05.20 (手抄稿 第五冊 p92 L3)]

and observe properly, at the risk of your life, all of the vows and pledges that you have received during your initiations.

At that time, Tantra teachings also have their initiations, known as “samaya,” which are called pledges, vows. We should not misunderstand! This vow is generally thought of as, “I claim, I swear in this.” So in all Tantric teachings, once you receive the vows, there are many Dharma protectors, they come to protect you by observing the samaya vows. The key is: why do they come to protect you? It is because you abide by this vow. Just like when we sign a contract with others, if you ask others to abide by the contract, you have to abide by your part of it, too. And when others violate, transgress, or infringe upon it, you would say, “Why don't you follow the rules?” This statement won't help. The Tantric samaya is very hard to uphold, this we should know.

However, when you sincerely uphold it, all the corresponding protectors of this vow will come, this is incredible. The most important part is not about getting this benefit! What is the actual pledge? Well, to guarantee that the blissful seeds planted by all Buddhas of the ten directions will be enhanced, the seeds will sprout and be free from impediment. This is truly more important than our shortsighted benefit. As for this concept, later it will be further discussed.

[35B,06.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p92 L14)]

So this “vow” is the foundation for the following: Bodhisattva vows, sravaka vows, and so forth, as well as the beginning of novice monk vows. “At the risk of your life” means that your life can be sacrificed, but the vows must be maintained. The life you risk is at most only one lifetime, once this vow is violated, too bad! Besides, if you risk your life for the sake of maintaining it, well! Just right for you to advance on the path, exactly what you are looking for! Now, this world is filled with suffering, and you are inspired to be reborn to Pure Land. Once you risk this life, you go there immediately, you can hardly wait! This is the reason that most people do not comprehend and are unable to uphold the precepts. The text states clearly, high-status, if you dedicate to high-status, and aspire to be reborn in Pure Land, it will immediately be effective! Just like that.

[35B,07.37 (手抄稿 第五冊 p93 L6)]

[English LR v.1 p.137-138](#)

You can take the vow or pledge again if you are affected by a root infraction, but your mind will have been spoiled, and it will be very difficult to give rise to good qualities. Therefore, specifically strive never to be tainted by root infractions and not be soiled by secondary infractions. Even if you are tainted by these, purify yourself of them with confession and restraint, since vows and pledges are the foundation of the path.

I will explain this next statement. It says that, especially when guarding against a “root infraction,” if you have violated the root infraction, Mahayana practitioners can take the vow again. However, very sorry, even if you retake it, your mental continuum is infringed. “Mental continuum,” meaning that the blessings from before are already spoiled, thus the merit will not arise. You have to start all over again; this is a very pitiful matter. Just like a machine, once damaged, even if you try to plug it in, it is useless, right? One needs to start all over again. So we should strive to never incur the root infraction, and also refrain from other infractions. If you do incur the infractions, what should you do? Immediately repent, so this confession is very important to ensure purity. In case it is contaminated, one should repent immediately, and prevent it from happening again. Why? This is the foundation. When engaging in any task, if the foundation is not ruined, the integrity will gradually, gradually grow. Once it is ruined, then it is spoiled. Right now, too many of us constantly feel: alas, these precepts, we can be careless and nonchalant! This attitude is wrong, precept

is the foundation; if there are no precepts, then nothing else [about spiritual training] can be discussed further.

[35B,09.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p94 L3)]

Although to those of us reciting Buddha's name by upholding the precepts and chanting Buddha's name; actually there is no exception even for those practicing Zen meditation and so forth. However, from the appearance, it seems like the Zen practitioner does not care about the precepts, how can that be? There are the precepts of meditative serenity, and precepts after the path-of-seeing! Certainly, a true meditator would fully focus on the precepts by thinking about "who is reciting Buddha's name." The practitioner's mind is very focused on nothing else, how can an infraction take place? [Lack of attention] is the cause for incurring an infraction, this we have to know. Now we are not able to look from the aspect of the essential characteristic, instead, we are constantly scratching the surface, not knowing how wrong we are. Furthermore, even with the variation between the Mahayana and Theravada precepts, actually they all are based on this foundation [of upholding the precepts of meditative serenity, and precepts after the path-of-seeing], this we have to recognize and understand. So ... well, next, the following statement will clarify it.

[35B,10.01 (手抄稿 第五冊 p94 L10)]

[English LR v.1 p.138](#)

Then train in good instructions on either the yoga with signs (in the context of the lower tantras), or the yoga of the generation stage (in the context of highest yoga tantra). After this training has been made firm, train well in either the yoga without signs (in the context of the lower tantras), or the yoga of the completion stage (in the context of highest yoga tantra).

Next, the text says, what is the first step to enter the Tantra teaching? The first step to study Tantra is to rely on virtuous teacher. Once you have relied on a virtuous teacher, he will bestow you with an initiation. After that, you should uphold it – to safeguard the samaya, the embodiment of the pledge. So the physical form of ordinary beings is our karmic effect. The true Tantric form is not like this, it is not the form of our karmic effect, it is known as “embodiment of the pledge,” and the pledge is the vow, a commitment. Why is it called a pledge? Samaya is the pledge. In other words: I vow to commit to achieve this. Usually, when we practice Buddha Dharma, to obtain the essence of the precepts, this essence is the root of the five meritorious qualities, right? Ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom; then based on such essence we advance step by step. When abiding by Tantric training, I pledge to receive the essence with this physical form. What is this essence called? It is called the embodiment of the pledge. Upon taking the Tantric vow, our body is no longer the physical form of an ordinary being. The Tantric training thus can be enhanced based on this foundation. This we have to know, so incurring infractions are definitely not allowed.

[35B,11.30 (手抄稿 第五冊 p95 L7)]

Fortunately, for now, we have not yet taken this Tantric vow. Once we take it, we will certainly downfall, why? It is very simple: before plugging into a high voltage line, it is fine. Once you connect to it by making any mistake, an instant electric shock can burn down the house and kill people. This is very explicit and clear! Now often we either slander without understanding it or carelessly claim that I am a Tantric practitioner. Both attitudes are way off, the reasoning is right in this section! Planting the seed is very good, but if you want to precisely attain the effect of Tantric training, you need to be very clear about the systematic order.

[35B,12.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p95 L12)]

Now with the above, “then,” the next step, “train in good instructions” is the Tantric section. Tantra teaching has four parts: three lower ones and one of the highest yoga. The three lower ones are Kriya (action) Tantra, Charya (performance), and Yoga. These three are known as “yoga with signs.” They emphasize the signs of action, and eventually enter into the yoga “without signs.” What are the signs of action? They are the conventional truth, without the sign is the ultimate truth. In other words, the conventional truth is the perfected high status. However, for that high status to become thoroughly perfected, it has to correspond with the wisdom of emptiness, this we need to know. So the genuine enlightened physical form is inseparable from

Dharma nature. The complete enlightened physical form must also have an enlightened mind, this we have to understand. But at the time of practice, the steps have to be certain. Just like when we weave a cloth, we have the longitudinal warp and transverse weft threads. In the final product, can you tell which one of the two goes first? Of course, I can't put on the warp first, and then put on the weft, wouldn't that be a joke? No, warp and weft coexist at the same time, but when weaving, first lay down the warp and then follow with the weft one at a time. This is very clear and explicit, so for us, all these concepts should be clarified. What about the highest yoga? The highest yoga is not about signs. Its first part is known as the generation stage, and the latter part is the completion stage.

[35B,13.17 (手抄稿 第五冊 p96 L8)]

Regarding this, we have briefly discussed it before. No matter which one, you have to study sincerely. Once your study is stabilized, then the next step is to advance from the three lower Tantra teachings of the “yoga without signs,” and then enter into the “completion stage” of the highest yoga. Achievement happens at the time of completion – this is what Tantric teachings refer to as achieving Buddhahood in one lifetime. In this practice, you have the choice of the three lower Tantras or the highest yoga Tantra.

[35B,13.45 (手抄稿 第五冊 p96 L11)]

Please turn to Lamrim text [page 138]. The first two paragraphs were discussed, they are about the systematic order of how to establish the foundation of the small, then the shared medium, and great capacities to enter the Tantra teaching and the three lower Tantra and highest yoga Tantra, advancing step by step. Continuing on, let's take a look at the next paragraph.

[35B,14.32 (手抄稿 第五冊 p96 L14)]

The *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* presents the body of such a path; these stages of the path also instruct you in this way.

The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment taught us the above. When speaking of this *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, we should realize and understand that this has been passed down all the way from Buddha Shakyamuni, through two great lineages of Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Manjusri, and then to Bodhisattvas Nagarjuna and Asanga. This is a complete lineage. Regardless of whether it is Profound View or Extensive Deeds, Mahayana or Theravada, Sutrayana or Tantrayana, in other words, this is the most precise, the most direct path. No matter if it is theoretical, scriptural, or if it was passed down all the way from India, the most complete lineage from the west to the east, they guide us with the most accurate path. Thus, the preceding explanation of the entire essence of the path, this is the origin of the entire path. At the same time, the stage for our meditation practice is also to abide by this systematic order. So from either perspective of quality or quantity, it is very complete. Also, before guiding us with

the quality and quantity, the sequence of the stages also is flawless. This is the most complete and brilliant aspect [of the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*].

[35B,16.42 (手抄稿 第五冊 p97 L9)]

The Great Elder taught this in other texts, as well.

So other than the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, Venerable Atisha also mentioned this concept in his other commentaries. However, the “other texts” are either specified in passing or remarked on briefly, whereas the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* is focused on the entire outline. So they are different.

[35B,17.17 (手抄稿 第五冊 p97 L13)]

His Concise Method of Achieving the Mahayana Path states:

**If you wish to attain unsurpassed
enlightenment,
Which has inconceivable greatness,
Be intent on practice and achieve its heart,
For enlightenment depends upon practice.**

**As this body of perfect leisure and opportunity
Was very difficult to obtain, and once obtained
Will be very difficult to possess again,
Make it meaningful by striving at practice.**

Other than what was stated above, besides his root reliance on the lineage, Venerable Atisha also explains this in his other teachings. What is next? The author quotes other commentaries to explain the same content. If you aspire to attain the unsurpassed, inconceivable spirit of great enlightenment, then what is the root cause? The root cause is practicing the teaching, and the heart of the training is Bodhichitta. Then what does this Bodhichitta rely on? It depends on our very difficult to obtain human form of leisure and opportunity. This human form of leisure and opportunity has great meaning, yet it is so rare to encounter. Thus, now having obtained it, we should strive quickly, definitely not let it go to waste. Once squandered, it will be very difficult to regain.

[35B,18.54 (手抄稿 第五冊 p98 L6)]

This was repeated many times before, and that is why before actually engaging in meditation practice, this point is first given to us in the section on taking full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity. When we have this recognition, all our meditation relies on practice, and this training requires the human form of leisure and opportunity. Now, if we have this leisure and opportunity yet we don't practice the teaching, later leisure and opportunity will become very difficult to obtain. Once you have this recognition, you will encourage yourself wholeheartedly. With this motivated mentality, when you attain the proper teaching, then you can advance. Otherwise, without such a mentality, even if there is a great teaching readily available, you are not able to practice.

[35B,19.47 (手抄稿 第五冊 p98 L11)]

For this point, most of us sitting here have this experience. Sure, the teaching is great; even though it is great you just cannot uphold it, why? There is no mental momentum, and one is constantly feeling that certain thing is necessary, and something else can't be done away with, this will not do, and that can't be missed out either! Actually, it is primarily because they do not recognize the importance of a human life of leisure and opportunity. For beginning members, perhaps their awareness of leisure and opportunity is stronger but, after a while, all these flaws will appear. This is because the practitioner did not get the accurate systematic order right from the start. Even if one has heard the great teachings – we don't need to talk about the great teachings, certainly the teaching is grand, but one just cannot find the doorway. We don't need to further discuss it! Just like talking about satellites, oh, it is incredibly wonderful, but how do we get up there? We have no clue. Anyway, it is up in the sky and I am here on Earth, I can praise and admire it, that is all! We will not elaborate on this. Even if we are able to grasp what is available to us, usually we cannot put it into practice, and it is because we lack this propelling force [knowing the value of the leisure and opportunity of the human form].

[35B,20.59 (手抄稿 第五冊 p99 L5)]

So here the text specifically tells us that, in the beginning, we have to contemplate and analyze more on leisure and opportunity. If we recognize this human life of leisure and opportunity, you can generate the proper mental capacity. In fact, at the present, everything can be left behind; all can be let go regardless of how important it is. Alas! A moment later, we can't let go of this task, and that thing has to stay, how hopeless! Needless to talk about the external issues, even with internal matters... I have seen too many such typical examples of practitioners. For now, we encounter any small illness and then we claim that we cannot practice! Alas, I feel embarrassed for myself in this aspect; all the patriarchs are alike, they strived even harder when they were ill. Why? Because illness is the cause of death! Ah! When you are about to die, you can hardly wait to practice with all your might before your last breath! How can one say: "Well, I am ill, fine, that is it, just lay there and forget about everything else!" [The patriarchs] would slowly... even when they were ill they would strive with all their might, is there anything else more important than practicing the teaching? Well, what is the cause [for the patriarchs to have achievement]? This [impermanence] is exactly it. From here on, later the text will tell us again: even the most important practice is this leisure and opportunity, but in the beginning of our practice, this leisure and opportunity is the starting point. This is quoted from the same source.

[35B,22.23 (手抄稿 第五冊 p99 L15)]

And his *Concisely Written Method of Achieving the Mahayana Path* says:

**Just as, when a chance arises
For prisoners to flee from prison,
They flee from that place,
As their goals are not the same as others',**

**So too if an opportunity arises
To cross over this great ocean of cyclic
existence,
You emerge from this household of existence,
As your goals are not the same as others'.**

Just like a prisoner, we are locked up in jail and we are sentenced to death. Once locked up, death is certain. Now, since there is a chance for us to flee, this opportunity is absolutely vital. Any other important task cannot be compared with how important it is. So if there were a chance to escape, you would flee with all your ability, you would never say: "Well, excuse me, I still need to get one more thing, not done yet, still need to wash my face, something else, need to eat ..." You wouldn't bother with anything else and flee desperately. So for us now, in the entire great ocean of cyclic existence, we can only be liberated if we have a human life of leisure and opportunity. To be liberated, the only thing we can rely on is to apply the teaching. In this situation, nothing else can compare to it, they can all be given up. One must flee and have to escape it!

[35B,23.56 (手抄稿 第五冊 p100 L10)]

I heard this once before: in the past, in our Xi-kang [historical Tibetan province] there was a practitioner, a meditator. He was very remarkable, usually after his daily meals, upon finishing eating, he would give the leftover food to others, give it away to others. Someone asked him: “Why not save it for tomorrow.” He replied, “How can I know if there will be a tomorrow, will there even be a tomorrow for me!” Well, he felt... after a meal, one of his attendants who experienced a lot of hardship serving him, why? The attendant had to give away the leftovers, had to give it to others to eat quickly. “Will I even be here tomorrow?” This practitioner always acted this way. In the end, when he departed this life, the signs were very nice, which was incredibly notable, and so this is one of the typical examples. You can read the *Biography of the Life of Milarepa*. No matter what, he always said, “Alas, I don’t even know when I will die, how can I have extra time to spare on such matters!”

[35B,24.58 (手抄稿 第五冊 p101 L3)]

So in the leisure and opportunity section from an earlier chapter, the text tells us that death can be included as part of the practice. In other words, once you have obtained this life of leisure and opportunity, you hurry up to apply the teaching. Only once you have reached a certain level of practice that you can escape cyclic existence, then that will be good. Otherwise, you have no idea when this leisure and opportunity is lost, and you won’t have the opportunity to obtain it again! If we can form such a mentality now, the application of meditation practice will absolutely work out. So the author tells us, nothing else can be compared with

[mindfulness of leisure and opportunity]. There is only one focus: escape from this cyclic existence, the burning mansion of the three realms [desire, form and formless realms].

[35B,25.47 (手抄稿 第五冊 p101 L8)]

English LR v.1 p.138-139

Also:

**Taking up the bodhisattva vow through abiding
In the practice of refuge, higher ethical
discipline,
And the basis of the aspirational spirit of
enlightenment,
Practice properly, in stages, with what ability
you have,
All the deeds of the bodhisattvas—
The six perfections and the like.**

Thus, as for the stages of practice, they are: taking refuge, followed by studying the precepts, and then higher ethical discipline. This higher ethical discipline is somewhat different. In general, our precepts are part of the seven types of vows of individual liberation [v.2 p.148], beginning from the five precepts to novice monks and nuns, probationary nuns, monks and nuns, for a total of seven types. As for this “higher ethical discipline,” it is not just in general, it still should be advanced step by step, and eventually reaching the three divisions of ethical discipline [v.2 p.148]. In this situation, what is this taking up “the Bodhisattva vows”? It is Bodhichitta. Because our teachings guide us to take

the unsurpassed supreme enlightenment path, actually this is also the direct path we should take. It is a direct route, the boulevard. When advancing on this direct path or boulevard, aspiration comes first and is followed by the actual deeds. This aspiration for Bodhichitta is the root. With this foundation, once we have studied it and then follow by taking the path of Bodhisattva deeds. The Bodhisattva deeds are the same as Bodhisattva vows, then abide by the six perfections, and expand from there toward all 84 thousand approaches to achieve the peerless effect of Buddhahood.

[35B,27.40 (手抄稿 第五冊 p102 L4)]

English LR v.1 p.139

Also:

**Cultivate the heart of wisdom and method—
Insight, meditative serenity, and their
unification.**

So the overall summary is nothing other than two points: one is the extensive blissful merit, the so-called aspect of the expedient method; the other is the laudable profound wisdom merit, the so-called wisdom. What is the essence of these two? In the end, the training is meditative serenity and insight. This is for stepwise advancement, which is primarily covered in the last part [of Lamrim in v.3]. Even in the end, the yoga of the generation stage and the yoga of the completion stage are all included in meditative stabilization and insight section. Both categories are covered in the section on Shamata and Vipassana. They can also be combined as the expedient method of the extensive

blissful merits, and the profound wisdom merits of insight.

[35B,28.48 (手抄稿 第五冊 p102 L10)]

Moreover, Bodhibhadra's *Chapter on the Collections of Concentration* states:

**First, make firm your spirit of perfect enlightenment,
Which has arisen from the strength of compassion.
Do not be attached to enjoying the resources of cyclic existence,
And turn your back on grasping.
Endowed with perfect jewels such as faith,
Respect your guru, who is equal to the Buddha.**

**With the pledges that this guru taught,
Joyously persevere in your meditations.**

What is the fundamental entrance of this encompassing Mahayana path? It is the supreme spirit of enlightenment, and the root of it is great compassion.

[36A,00.08 (手抄稿 第五冊 p105 L1)]

So first cultivate compassion in your mind and to stabilize it, and then from here to inspire the unsurpassed spirit of enlightenment. Thus, through the process of upholding the practice, all your efforts are for this purpose. Consider all the contaminated enjoyment

of the three realms [desire, form and formless realms] in the three lifetimes [past, present and future lifetimes], and you are able to detach them completely. Moreover “turn your back,” this is disenchantment. All the different kinds of worldly worthiness, luxurious and good things, are all forsaken.

[36A,00.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p105 L5)]

So what do we wish to have? We want the following: “Endowed with perfect jewels such as faith.” We totally forsake the conventional wealth of worldly ordinary beings. These perfect jewels are what we should accomplish. We normally call them the “seven indispensable elements of Buddhist practice.”* What are the seven? They are faith, ethical discipline, studying the teaching, shame, embarrassment, generosity, and intelligence. Generosity is to give things away, and it includes three types [v.2 p. 122 gift of teachings, gift of fearlessness, and material gifts]. Intelligence is wisdom, and that is insight. There are variations in other scriptures that combine both shame and embarrassment as one, and include joyous perseverance; some other sources separate shame and embarrassment and do not include joyous perseverance. Since joyous perseverance is required for earnest practice, so it must be implied in every effort of these elements. Sometimes, this joyous perseverance is specifically emphasized, so shame and embarrassment are combined and include joyous perseverance. As for intelligence, here it is referred to as wisdom. Actually, wisdom arises from concentration, so some sources combine concentration and wisdom as one. In this circumstance, we can also

say: faith, precepts, listening, shame and embarrassment, joyous perseverance, generosity, concentration, and wisdom, are the seven indispensable elements. So if we can perfect this practice, then we can always uphold the teaching without regressing in cyclic existence and downfall [to the miserable realms].

[*The seven indispensable elements of Buddhist practice are compared to treasures. Another source describes it as: hearing the correct teaching, believing it, keeping the precepts, engaging in meditation, practicing assiduously, renouncing one's attachments, and the wisdom of reflecting on oneself.]

[36A,02.44 (手抄稿 第五冊 p106 L6)]

“Respect your guru, who is equal to the Buddha,” this is the aspect of self-preparation. For our reliance, the most important foundation for cultivation is our own teacher, the teacher we rely on. We should respect this teacher like a Buddha, to study various instructions taught by him and practice them accordingly. This is the most important step for us to actually enter the Mahayana practice and advance accordingly.

[36A,03.31 (手抄稿 第五冊 p106 L10)]

**Receive through your guru's kindness
The bestowal of initiations, both vase and
secret.**

Purifying body, speech, and mind,

**Such practitioners are fit for attainments.
By completing the collections
That arise from the branch of concentration,
They will quickly achieve the supreme
attainment.
This is the way of mantra.**

The section before this is the shared foundation for Mahayana training, regardless of whether it is for Sutrayana or Tantrayana. Once you have stabilized this shared base, if you have the capacity to take the fast path, then that is when you enter the Tantrayana. Actually, Tantrayana not only is the quickest path, but it also has a special characteristic. What is it? What kind of characteristic? This swiftness not only benefits the self, but it also benefits others. Why does it say that it benefits the self and others? What is the characteristic of your aspiration of the supreme spirit of enlightenment? It is because you want to alleviate the afflictions for all sentient beings. Although you have this aspiration, to alleviate their afflictions, you still need to learn the method to alleviate the affliction. Now we are submerged in the long, dark nights of ignorance, with such ignorance and lack of wisdom, we can't even help ourselves, how can we rescue others? So one still relies on the most accurate and thorough method, and this method has to be taught by no one else but Buddha.

[36A,05.09 (手抄稿 第五冊 p107 L6)]

So in order for you to actually rescue all human beings, you would have to have Buddha's wisdom, just compassion alone is not enough. Once you have

Buddha's great wisdom, then your compassion can be thoroughly fulfilled. So, at that time, one needs to study by applying the fastest method, the most direct approach, and then followed by study Tantrayana. Also, because you are endowed with this great compassionate mentality, at that time you are suitable to take the most perfect and supreme teaching from all Buddhas. Otherwise, this supreme teaching is bestowed on you, but you lack the ability to embrace it. Now, when we were told to do something, well, for a trivial task you feel that you can't handle it. Engaging in a small task, but you just can't take it, how can you handle the unsurpassed supreme Dharma? So for us to become a vessel to receive good qualities, your readiness has to be concordant as well.

[36A,06.15 (手抄稿 第五冊 p107 L13)]

I will give a random example. For example, now that we go out to shop for a set of furniture. Well, this set of furniture is extremely pretty! You want it so badly. However, you live in a house that is a straw shack. May I ask, will buying this furniture be useful to you? It is of no use at all! Isn't it very obvious? Or, with your health, you say, "Well, this medicine is very good!" However, your body is too weak to stand against a gust of wind, very fragile. Once you take that invigorating medicine, it will certainly kill you right away. So, this is why in the beginning, often we need to truly pay attention to first equip ourselves to be a Dharma vessel; whereas engaging in any small task, "Alas, this is too much, can't do it, no, no way!" Then we hide in the back, well, that is the attitude. Any tiny bit of hardship, one's reaction will

be, “Alas! Always feel ...” such is the attitude. That is totally not aligned; there is absolutely no conformity!

[36A,07.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p108 L5)]

You all should properly study the principal on this path. In the future, you will for sure recognize many concepts and it will all become clear. We don't even need to talk about being like the great Bodhisattvas who sacrifice their physical forms while helping others. When facing something that presents a little bit of hardship, if our attitude for now is “Well! I must act!” Or “Hurry up, I will do it!” If you can react in this manner, gradually the conformity will arise. As for now, where there is any small task, I hurry up and hide, don't let anyone see me. It's better if someone else can do it, so I can avoid it. That is the condition of totally not being in accordance; it is very explicit and clear. So the text repeatedly mentions in the previous section, you should analyze your own mindstream until it is very definite and exact.

[36A,07.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p108 L11)]

As for the Tantra teaching, there are definitely many tantra practitioners who do not involve themselves in many extraneous matters, we have to clearly discern this attitude. They distinguish the right from wrong, big or small issues very clearly. They know that there are unsurpassed goals here; for the sake of reaching that goal these minor things right now can be ignored. So they leave these minor things behind, they can become detached, and this is the right attitude. So we must recognize the entirety of the path, and then you

determine the path to take for yourself. Furthermore, continue with perseverance, thus it is proper, and that is the right thing to do! This is why, at the very beginning, we have to first understand the stages of the path in their entirety, recognize them first. Then, when you take them on, you can be steadily assured. Otherwise, when the winds blow from the east, you lean toward the east, or when they blow west, you yield to the west. You listen to this person and feel that he's right, and you want to follow him. Listen to another person, and you agree! Go to another Dharma center, you take a look and are also in agreement, then follow ... thus, an entire lifetime is totally wasted. This we have to know.

[36A,09.05 (手抄稿 第五冊 p109 L5)]

Now strictly speaking, with this complete awareness and after practicing accordingly in this way, you will indeed obtain complete understanding. Through practice, one will form a strong will, staunch ability, and then you can study the Tantric teaching. It will be the quickest path to the highest yoga tantra. The initiation of the highest tantra yoga has four parts: the “vase,” the “secret,” “wisdom initiation” and so forth, for gradual advancement step by step. Hence, what do you depend on to receive the most complete blessing? It is the reliance on the guru. This obtainment is all due to the immeasurable kindness of the guru, so this is why the teacher is specifically emphasized in Tantra. Besides, when we serve a teacher in Tantric practice that is totally different from our usual attendance on a teacher, completely different. There is a specific reason, if one's

qualification is not there, we should not use this approach to serve a Tantric teacher.

[36A,10.20 (手抄稿 第五冊 p109 L12)]

The way to attend to a Tantric teacher is such: the teacher picks something up, “Look at this, what is it?” You see it as black, the teacher tells you it is white, and then you have to look at it as white. You shouldn’t say, that the teacher tells you it is black, anyhow, you take it as white even in reality it is black. Wrong! The teacher tells you it is white, you should contemplate in this way: “yes, it is white! However, due to my karmic obstacles, I see it as black.” You have to form an incredibly repentant mentality, just like that. The teacher takes one shoe and tells you: hat, and you react immediately to put it on your head, this is a hat. Why? Why do you do this? There are various reasons. You can’t just verbally abide by him; your mental conformity should be in accordance as well.

[36A,11.08 (手抄稿 第五冊 p110 L4)]

So Venerable Milarepa was very interesting. The way his teacher tortured him, he would absolutely not think: alas! How can the teacher be like this? Now, in our mundane way of thinking: “this teacher is absolutely a worldly villain! How can studying Buddha Dharma be such torment?” We would definitely think this way. However, Venerable Milarepa never had this thought, he always thought of it as his own karmic obstacles! Well, just because of this, Milarepa succeeded in his

attainment. However, pay attention! Why is it that a disciple of Buddha Dharma needs to be equipped with wisdom? It is because one must respond accordingly in front of a qualified teacher. Otherwise, if you react in this way to a teacher who lacks the qualification, then very sorry, both of you will descend to the hell realms. This is where the damage to Buddha Dharma arises. Some may attempt: “Since the Tantric teacher can tell you to do something, so one can pretend to be a Tantra guru to do whatever one wants. I will also do the same and go along.” In this case, that will be the end of Buddha’s teaching, it will turn into chaos! So for this point, we have to distinguish very clearly, very explicitly.

[36A,12.14 (手抄稿 第五冊 p110 L12)]

In particular, many contemporary Tantric teachers specifically emphasize this point. So Lama Tsong-kha-pa mentioned: the teacher and the disciple must observe each other, this is not said by Tsong-kha-pa but it is based on the scriptures. If you are short of careful observation, and randomly engage in study, this violation applies to both teacher and disciple, neither one is doing it right. This is against the Dharma – in Tantric practice, precision is necessary! Once the practice is mistaken, you will never have the chance for attainment! So our random going for the initiation is just to plant the seeds! Does everyone understand: we always think that by planting the seed and apply the ritual, thus achievement becomes available. How absurd can this be! How wrong this is. This we all should pay attention to, pay absolutely attention. The teacher that you are to follow, never think that it is too long to

observe him for more than ten years. At the least, follow him properly for three to five years, and then you can seriously talk about relying on this teacher. This is just mentioned in passing, and please pay attention to this in the future, be absolutely careful! Don't say, "Well! This is an eminent guru." Maybe he is eminent, even if he is the greatest guru; you still need to go through a period of observation. Even with his eminence, yet you may not conform to his greatness! This is a very simple concept. This condition we have to recognize very clearly.

[36A,13.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p111 L7)]

Because it is through the initiation from the guru, the most complete seeds of the body, speech, and mind for Buddhahood are specifically planted in our consciousness; we can very quickly correspond to it. So we often say, like the electricity that we use, don't look at it and take it as just an electrical cord, or even take it as dark scrap metal, when it is connected to your house, all the electricity in need is there. If you were to generate the power plant on your own, none of us has this capability. How much will it cost to build a power plant? It takes more than several million; the investment is like tossing a rock in the water. Tens of millions is not enough, how many billions would it take? How can anyone of us have this capability? And, in fact, the perfect seed to achieve Buddhahood in Buddha Dharma is far exceeding this. Now, through a guru like this, his blessing is on your mental stream. Take a look at such great kindness, can you imagine? It is truly hard to visualize! Just like that. So we should understand this aspect.

[36A,14.55 (手抄稿 第五冊 p111 L15)]

The reason why I said this in the beginning is: once we plant this accurate seed in the beginning then abide by the proper stages to advance, when the conditions are fulfilled, we should be able to take off on this most speedy, most direct, and best path. So, upon receiving the initiation, the practitioner's body, speech, and mind are purified to hold the seed of Buddhahood. With such attainment and then,

[36A,15.31 (手抄稿 第五冊 p112 L4)]

**By completing the collections
That arise from the branch of concentration,
They will quickly achieve the supreme
attainment.
This is the way of mantra.**

Of course, the preceding precepts and so forth are the foundation. So to study Tantric practice, our body is known as the embodiment of a set of samaya vows. It is not referred to as precept; instead, it is "vow." There is a special reason, with specific reasoning. It means: I vow to achieve this practice, the unsurpassed great teaching. I vow to apply this physical form to abide by these vows in all future actions, so on and so forth. It is like signing a contract with others, you can't break the contract. If you abide by this contract, the other party also abides by it. The opposite party obeys the contract by giving you everything you need to achieve Buddhahood; however,

you absolutely have to abide by it, too. So when you receive Tantric initiation, by taking this Tantric vow, our consciousness receives the same essence of the precept. This essence of the precept is planted and is the seed of instant Buddhahood. Only upon this foundation can you study the stage of generation, stage of completion, and achieve Buddhahood in this lifetime. The required qualifications are very lofty; this is also why tantric precepts should never be transgressed. Actually, there are only a few tantric vows! Just a few treatises, well, but they are very difficult to uphold! Normally for Theravada precepts, when the mental momentum is at fault, it is still adequate. However, for tantric vows, any erroneous mental activity is a transgression. It is that serious.

[36A,17.14 (手抄稿 第五冊 p113 L2)]

So up to here, followed by properly building on this foundation, first begin with “completing the collections that arise from the branch of concentration.” This is what we consider as the “stage of generation.” Base on this stage, by the end of the stage of completion, we will very quickly reach attainment. This is the concept of taking the tantric path; the reasoning to apply tantric teaching. The author mainly specifies the stages and clarifies it in this paragraph. Following the clarification of the stages, next

[36A,17.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p113 L6)]

ii) The Purpose

Why do we need to follow these steps? What is the purpose of abiding by the stages, what is the benefit? What is the meaning of it? Let's go over the text.

[36A,18.09 (手抄稿 第五冊 p113 L9)]

***Question:* If the teachings for the persons of small and medium capacities are prerequisites for the person of great capacity, they may as well be considered stages for the path of the person of great capacity. Why use the expression, “stages of the path shared with the persons of small and medium capacities”?**

If, like what we have covered so far, it all meant to guide us to advance to great capacity. Then, in this case, it should be sufficient to include both medium and small capacities in the great capacity. Why bother to separately establish the stages for the shared medium and shared small capacities? Why is it? Well, the answer is as follows.

[36A,19.04 (手抄稿 第五冊 p114 L1)]

***Reply:* There are two great purposes for differentiating three types of persons and guiding students accordingly:**

So to differentiate them, there are two reasons that these are divided into three capacities to guide us.

Before we begin to cover these two meanings, here I will first explain a concept. For all-encompassing teachings, each one, and the arrangement of every category, has a necessary reason, they each have a specific reason. With the reasons, what is the benefit, without them what is the disadvantage? This allows you to distinguish very clearly, to discern it very explicitly. With your recognition of this, you will find out that lacking the logic will not work, but if there are more reasons than the two, then it is unnecessary! So if you can have a clear picture about it ahead of time, what is the advantage? They have great benefits. Often, during the course of our practice, we encounter some instructions and start applying them. Maybe some people are not like this, yet we may have more or less studied some, but the stages we have studied are incomplete. Without the proper steps, when one hears instructions from somewhere else, “Well! That is right, this one I have not heard before!” “Sure! There is this type of issue here [in my current practice]!” So it causes you to have doubts, and then you don’t know what to adopt or cast aside, this is one type. What about another type? “In this case, I will leave this step alone!” And you go ahead with your own practice, this is even worse. Once you begin to practice, there will certainly be issues. Because of your lack of understanding beforehand and lack of preparation, when you get to that juncture, the problem emerges and you don’t know what to do about it. Ah! By that time, such suffering is unspeakable, and you will keep circling at that same spot without knowing when to stop.

[36A,21.12 (手抄稿 第五冊 p114 L15)]

Thus, this is the first requirement for completing the stages of the path, for every level, the certainty is clearly laid out for you to have a steady understanding in clarity. At that time, to advance, regardless of what the conditions are, well, my mind is determined, confident without any wavering; this is when you are taking the direct path. So here there is one thing that we should understand: at our stage as an ordinary being, due to our weak mental capacity, we often feel that, alas, just hurry up and give me an effective practice, that is it! However, the reason the author deliberately does not give it to you is just this. In fact, to guide you with the given stage is just for you to advance on the quickest path, an unsurpassed solution without any detour. Everyone should comprehend the concept, please do understand it!

[36A,22.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p115 L6)]

If your mental capacity is weak, you are not required to study it, wait until your mental capacity is strengthened then go for it. By the time you have the mental force, the effect will definitely be realized. This is absolutely a matter of fact. However, at the learning stage, we have to impel ourselves. Usually, our study under any circumstance has a certain amount of reluctance, there is no exception, rarely any exception – whatever study we engage in, apply it with 30 percent reluctance. Then we stretch ourselves to move on, and gradually we are advancing, well, the hurdle is past! Just like that. So if we understand this concept, certainly we should feel incredibly fortunate and strive to push forward. With this motivating force, engage accordingly,

any slight reluctance can be easily overcome and, eventually, the peerless benefit is still ours, continue to be with us. So it has to be distinguished in this way in many aspects. Hence, the most crucial aspect of Lamrim is still within this chapter.

[36A,23.05 (手抄稿 第五冊 p115 L14)]

Several days ago, one fellow practitioner came to me and talked about others who had also written something similar to this guidance. From the appearance, well, they look the same! To study Buddha Dharma, the first requirement is a virtuous teacher, and so on so forth. It seemed to list everything in great detail. However, the characteristic of Lamrim is in this chapter. Normally, when we read any book, if we feel it as irrelevant, why bother talking about it. In fact, the most brilliant essence of Lamrim is right in this chapter, this we have to understand and should recognize.

[36A,23.47 (手抄稿 第五冊 p116 L4)]

However, there is one thing for everyone's immediate attention. Because we do not have an actual understanding of this complete essence, when we begin to study, our mind is totally unfamiliar with it so it is very hard to experience the actual content. Hence, in such a situation, everyone should not be anxious: tell yourself that I am fortunate to have this opportunity today to learn these perfect stages, such a great teaching. This is a complete sequence; from the ordinary worldly scholastic perspective would be either graduate school or at least

college level. However, now we are either at the level of elementary or high school [from the perspective of understanding the Buddha Dharma]. Hence, we should also strive to encourage ourselves: try our best to advance. Once we finish studying the entire systematic order of the Lamrim, to review it again then we are able to grasp the entire content, just like that. By then, the effort and time we have saved, wow! The time saved is measured by unlimited eons. The effort saved – as far as happiness and suffering are concerned – wow! That is ... the elongated torment in the three miserable realms and being fried in the deep fryer, these sufferings are avoided. This is the actual laudable benefit to us.

[36A,25.14 (手抄稿 第五冊 p116 L13)]

Now let's look at the text, what are the two great meanings for guiding the students on the paths of the three types of persons?

[36A,25.20 (手抄稿 第五冊 p116 L14)]

(1) it destroys the presumption

This is the first one. Through this guidance, it will destroy our “presumption” of arrogance. The arrogance has many types. This pride has seven types: simple pride, greater pride, superiority, and inferiority, and so on. As long as the subjective aspect of the self exists, this pride must be there. Since pride is an afflictive sentiment, even if you eradicated wrong views, the residual propensity, the remaining habit of arrogance is still there. In this situation, this pride appears in many

different forms. Here it is specifically known as superiority. What is superiority? It is, before you achieve that actual state, you think that you have reached it – yet you overestimate your ability, complement and exaggerate it. This is called superiority. So how is this superiority described?

[36A,26.32 (手抄稿 第五冊 p117 L7)]

of asserting that you are a person of great capacity despite not having developed the states of mind common to persons of small and medium capacities,

It points out that we don't even have the mentality of shared small or shared medium capacities, and we think that we are practitioners of the great capacity. This is the first meaning; let's further elaborate on this one in more detail. We briefly introduced the intent of the shared great capacity earlier, what is this state of mind? It is to benefit all sentient beings, so we aspire to achieve Buddhahood; this is the characteristic of ultimate Bodhichitta. Thus, to inspire this mentality, what process is required? The initial process has to be: first, one has to recognize every worldly aspect – not just in our desire realm, even in the form and formless realms. Anything enjoyable, once you recognized it, ah! This [worldly enjoyment] is the root source of suffering. And then generate absolute disenchantment. From there, we begin to consider others. By then, you can sense those contaminated worldly people, and sincerely feel sorry for them and want to help them – this is shared medium capacity. As for now, we can't even let go of any minor

worldly desire. For the sake of this mundane enjoyment, we engage in this and are occupied by that. This is not even at the level of shared small capacity, whereas surprisingly we claim that we are great capacity practitioners. This is superiority.

[36A,28.35 (手抄稿 第五冊 p118 L3)]

So how is this superiority formed? It is because we are totally clueless about the genuine essence of the stages of the path; we have no understanding at all! We just hear people say, “Well, this Mahayana Buddha Dharma is great!” “Oh! Of course, I want the best.” There is no exception, as long as this “self” is there, it is accompanied by this pride. This arrogance will lead you to highly overestimate yourself, “Oh, since this teaching is super and great, of course, I am super and great!” Actually, are you at the level of this super and great? You don’t have a clue! So this is known as the mentality of superiority. With this mentality of superiority, is there any possibility to practice the teaching? It is absolutely not possible. So now the author has clearly and explicitly laid out the stages, all you have to do is examine and realize, “Alas, it is not so! I don’t even know enough from the kindergarten or elementary level. To claim I know something about college is so ridiculous!” This superiority mentality is then tamed.

[36B,00.08 (手抄稿 第五冊 p119 L1)]

Once your arrogance is tamed, you will naturally study well with humility. Unless you give up on yourself,

that is not discussed here! For us true practitioners, the first obstacle is superiority – we always think we know a lot, always think of ourselves as great Bodhisattvas, always feel something about ourselves, if we're unwilling to learn humbly, that would be helpless! Once the arrogance is destroyed, by focusing on the study, then you will have a chance to advance. If everyone does so, then Buddha Dharma will thrive. Because your practice corresponds with the teaching, as long as you abide by the teaching, Buddha Dharma will remain in this world. Why is that we are in this present condition? Everyone says: "Alas, the current state is not ideal!" We always blame it on this or that. Honestly speaking, where should we truly place the blame? The blame should be on this superiority. So long as you uphold this systematic order to examine inwardly, all blames will be resolved. When everyone examines within, Buddha Dharma will gradually flourish. This is the first step.

[36B,01.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p120 L1)]

and (2) it is of great benefit for those whose minds have the greatest, medium, and least capacity.

Why is there the need to greatly benefit all types of practitioners with great, medium and least capacities?

[36B,01.16 (手抄稿 第五冊 p120 L3)]

How does it benefit them? Even the two persons of higher capacities must seek high status and liberation, so it is not wrong to teach students of

medium and great capacities the practices that develop the attitudes of persons of small capacity and persons of medium capacity. They will develop good qualities.

So other than the above necessary conditions, there is another one, which is to allow all types of persons to obtain benefits, whether they are of great capacity, medium capacity, or small capacity. Because even though Lamrim is for guiding those of great capacity, however, those great capacity practitioners also need to attain the shared medium and small capacities. So they are known as shared medium and small capacities. Thus, the arrangement of the systematic order is in this manner: to advance from small, medium capacities and so on – there is no fault. Not only is it flawless, but also, due to this sequential guidance, we can develop good qualities and enhance our capacity. According to this order, the practitioner can advance step by step with enhanced capability and attain the corresponding merits for stepwise advancement. So the arrangement is not at fault. What about the other aspect?

[36B,02.57 (手抄稿 第五冊 p120 L12)]

English LR v.1 p.139-140

Those persons of least capacity may train in higher practices, but this will lead to their giving up their lower perspective without rising to a higher perspective, and thus they would be left with nothing.

On the other hand, there is a type of person who has weaker mental fortitude - with lesser mental strength. If they are requested to start practicing from the great capacity right from the start, "Alas! This will not work, sigh; I cannot do it!" Eventually, they are not able to practice great capacity, and even small capacity cannot be obtained! Well! This type of person ends up being excluded from the path. What is the reason that Buddha Dharma is excellently encompassing? Because the teaching can imbue various types of people. Today, you highly upholding this great capacity yet excluded other practitioners, therefore your practice is not thorough. So the author applies this stepwise method as guidance for the potential great capacity practitioner to advance step by step! By doing so, not only are there no faults, but it also allows those practitioners to properly advance based on the rational order. As for the small capacity practitioner, the guidance is also available. It has such great advantages! So this is the purpose of applying the shared small and medium, as well as the great capacities as guidance. Thus, we should recognize this concept. With this understanding, it will be very beneficial throughout our course of study.

[36B,04.20 (手抄稿 第五冊 p121 L8)]

At the same time, for the great capacity practitioners, not only is this arrangement guiding us to advance; so what is the purpose of great capacity? Besides your personal advancement, you also guide others along the path. Once you experience the process with complete knowledge of the entire path – successful in personal achievement as well as guiding others

skillfully – you are able to properly and flawlessly guide others. So regardless of benefiting the self or others, this is the required order, this is the true excellence of such an arrangement.

[36B,04.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p121 L12)]

Up to here, we might as well examine ourselves: reflecting on our current state of speaking about a lot of muddled things and engaging in argument of what is right from wrong. It is impossible for one to know what to do. Some say your Theravada practice is lesser and not ideal, yet the rebuttal claims that even though you are a Mahayana practitioner, mere empty talk is useless! Alas! So much contention that everything is turned on its head; whereas for now, this arrangement extensively including teachings for all great, medium and small capacities without any omission, every aspect corresponding properly. It inclusively covers everything without leaving out anything. Is there room for contention? Not anymore. Furthermore, with the above stated situation, when everyone is bickering, after a while, not only the practice of teaching is incomplete and after the argument, all may end up downfall to hell realm. Well! Now it is not like that, everyone is able to find this correct path, not only the arrangement is free from contention, but it also abides by proper method to allow everyone to advance together according to this steady order, and to traverse on this most perfect path.

[36B,06.00 (手抄稿 第五冊 p122 L5)]

So one can notice, in our Chinese Buddhist communities for the past several hundred years, well, it is fairly fragmented. It is truly difficult to think back on it! As for Tibet, since Lama Tsong-kha-pa completely restored the entire teachings, it has been 600-700 years to this point. This lineage of the teachings still shines like the sun at high noon. Why? Lama Tsong-kha-pa used all sorts of methods to uphold this perfect teaching. Regardless of what capacity you are, everyone can be imbued! For persons with higher capacity, they can reach the peak step by step; the lower ones can advance gradually from the foundation. One can imagine the completeness of this teaching.

[36B,06.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p122 L10)]

This is from the entire perspective of the vastness of the Buddha Dharma, so what about for individuals like us? It can also be applied accordingly. We have to know that studying Buddha Dharma is not a matter of just one lifetime; it takes long eons to advance. Now you are entering this path, taking the correct steps, as long as you follow the accurate systematic order in this life, and enhance it life after life, of course in the end you will advance to the peak. Thus, when the first step is right, actually what does that mean for you? It implies one is taking the first proper step on the highest, most accurate and most complete route, is this right? This is very clear and explicit; so clear and obvious. As for its profoundness and vastness from the perspective of this entire trend, if one distills the trend and applies it to one's mental stream, this arrangement applies to any one of us as well! As long as one takes the first proper

step, life after life one would automatically continue on this same path.

[36B,08.01 (手抄稿 第五冊 p123 L3)]

Up to here, I think we should all feel encouraged and pleased. Now everyone claims: “Alas, it is the degenerate time! The teachings are disappearing!” However, although we are in such fragmented conditions, we are still able to obtain this encompassing teaching, what do we rely on? What is the reason? It is because of our past karma. So this Buddha Dharma is so ingenious, so wondrous! As long as you have planted the cause and you don’t give up, you strive accordingly to eradicate your negative obstacles, work on the accumulation of your merits to conform to the teaching, and definitely life after life advancement follows! Even the teaching nowadays is fragmented, well! Yet we bounce around here and there [in cyclic existence] surprisingly we have encountered such an encompassing teaching. Please think about it: who had predicted that on this day we would be here studying this teaching together? How wonderful the good qualities of Buddha Dharma are. Upon having this thought, we should be pleased!

[36B,09.05 (手抄稿 第五冊 p123 L10)]

When I have free time, I noticed that everyone is distressed; my feeling is truly, sigh! How wrong can this be. Usually when I am not occupied I would be happy. Why? It is for nothing but reflecting on the teaching! Ah,

just thinking of it makes me very pleased! Often, for no reason just this thought makes me happy, even when affliction or distress arises, as soon as I think of the teaching and that makes me happy. Why? Because only by relying on the teaching can we remove our afflictions, why? Before one obtains this method, one can do nothing but miserably stare at the afflictions. Staring at the afflictions is not the critical part! When the affliction arises, one would strengthen it over and over which is followed by downfall to the hell realms. When yelled at by others, one takes it as uncalled for. One probably would think: this guy, why is he yelling at me? I need to get back at him! And then, what is the effect? After engaging in such negative karma, everyone would downfall together! Isn't this very clear and explicit? Well! Come to think of it now, we take the yelling positively, now I can purify the debt that I owed him. When such affliction arises, by thinking of it this way one will become happy, too. Such happiness applies to pleasant situations, even during times of affliction one can still be happy, what more can you ask for?

[36B,10.11 (手抄稿 第五冊 p124 L5)]

In every given moment, if one can think of it this way, not only will the immediate afflictions be resolved, but also one's conformity toward the teaching will increase and one will be concordant with this condition of learning the teaching. In the future, one would easily be reconnected with the teaching again! This is our best practice on the go! Surprisingly as of now, our study is managed in such misery, my advice to you all is: "Well! When you have free time, better listen to more

teachings!” Yet, everyone always occupied by this or that. I truly don’t know how to help. All I can do is lament behind, how powerless. I have seen several elder monks, since they learned of this recording, they took a set of tapes listened to it once, twice, three times, or even more, I can’t praise them enough. They really experienced such benefit; I just mention this in passing.

[36B,11.04 (手抄稿 第五冊 p124 L11)]

So we need to know, well! This systematic order has such greatness, such benefit! Thus, first, with regard to benefiting the self, the teaching enables us to tame our arrogance, allows us to advance. As for benefiting others, if we are in control of the situation, we could broadly include persons of great, medium, and small capacities. Actually, regardless of whether it is benefiting self or others, both are required for our ultimate purpose, so for now this is where we should explore more.

[36B,11.40 (手抄稿 第五冊 p124 L15)]

Let me stress this one more time, what should we actually be engaging in? We should engage in benefiting self and others! So for the time being, the teaching can prevent our superior attitude, this seems to belong to the first aspect [benefiting the self]. Actually, our purpose should be to help others, thus the second aspect [benefiting others] is required to be studied! This is referring to the great capacity. What about the small capacity? We also know that small scope wouldn’t stop their continuous practice; the reason one is unable to

advance is due to one's weighty karmic obstacles and lack of merits. One can abide by the method of the small capacity, with gradual enhancement; eventually one will reduce the karmic obstacles and accumulate merits. When one's ability is strengthened, well! By that time, one's mentality becomes stronger, and one can take the opportunity to advance in orderly sequence! Thus, regardless from whatever angle you look at it, the great benefits are there! So here pay attention! Now that everyone has this understanding, this is why I specified that encompassing integrity of Lamrim lies here, this is the key to our study of great scriptures, and it is also the most difficult part. Now, let's continue.

[36B,12.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p125 L8)]

English LR v.1 p.140

Furthermore, there could be persons who have the fortune to have already produced the higher paths in past lives. If they are taught the paths shared with persons of lower capacity and they then train in them, they will quickly give rise either to those good qualities developed previously or to those not developed before.

So again, for those endowed with higher virtuous roots, we can explain to them this shared path for their practice, regardless of whether he has already developed it in the past. If one has “developed previously,” once being reminded, one will very quickly conform to it. Indeed just like what the Sixth Patriarch said: “one's mind should not dwell on any attachment.” The Sixth Patriarch already had attainment in past lives,

ah! His instant enlightenment is achieved. It is the same for us now, those who truly have these virtuous roots, when you speak to him about the human life of leisure and opportunity, he hears it with tears streaming and hairs standing on end. That shows that he has practiced before. By thinking of death, he is immediately mindful. Once reminded, this mentality [of the shared capacities] is generated. After it is formed, what are the advantages and what are the disadvantages without it? Because although the attainment may have happened before, it is contaminated by this life's worldly concerns, so the virtuous root is enshrouded and one is not able to put it into practice. From your explanation of this practice, he can immediately be reconnected and apply the practice right away. This urged him to advance and is in time for him to be uplifted. Such effort [of reminding others] is absolutely appropriate. If, by chance the virtuous roots have not yet developed, then one must cultivate it. So for great capacity practitioners, not only is there no impact, but it also gives rise to good qualities, this is very clear. Next sentences:

[36B,14.17 (手抄稿 第五冊 p126 L5)]

Consequently, as they have already developed lower paths, they can be led to successively higher paths, and thus their own path from practice in earlier lives will not be delayed.

We should know that starting from the very basic, “lower paths” – from the very initial stage, we can be guided to advance to the highest level. So toward one's own aspiration to practice the higher paths, one should

not slow down. “Delay” means turning in big circles, and “delay” also means to slow down. Thus, we should know this concept here is particularly important, one of the most critical. For us true practitioners of Buddha Dharma, although we are ordinary beings, regardless of whether we have or have not practiced the teachings before, now the author is guiding us to begin from the initial stage. We may say, “So why not just tell us how to practice, why bother with all the above instructions?” That is not the point! The point is it has its great reasoning. Even to cultivate from the initial stage – certainly! The most basic one is the rarity of leisure and opportunity of the human form, although it is indeed rare, and you don’t seem need to do anything special; just by telling you what kind of advantages the higher level has. Once you have more understanding of the benefit of encompassing Buddhahood, the more you know about it the more motivated you will be, right?

[36B,15.36 (手抄稿 第五冊 p126 L14)]

In this section there is a specific function, that is, applying the teaching is a tough job, not an effortless one. If it were an easy task, needless to talk about the laudable benefit of applying Buddha Dharma, or the specific faults of not applying the teaching, you would just go for it because it is a pleasure! If you were told to stop, you would be unwilling. To practice the teaching is tough, so why do you want to engage in it? That is because there has specific benefit. So what is the specific benefit? The benefit is not at the initial stage but at the highest level. The text reveals to us the highest concept so to inspire us, ah! We aspire to apply it. What

is the effect? If the text only talks about to apply the highest level alone, it is like a satellite high up in the sky; one is inspired to achieve it, but doesn't know how to get started. Now we often talk about the great scriptures, wow! Incredibly great! You are inspired to abide by it, but upon the thought of it, sigh! This is the state for a very senior Bodhisattva, but I am an ordinary being, which is far from it, there is no way for me to apply! Hence, such high state is said to be very remarkable, whereas to us is totally of no help. What should be done? Well! When at actual session one should start from "lower paths"; upon actually hearing the "highest path," we will be motivated with strong aspiration. This aspiration for virtue must be generated from the highest advantage.

[36B,17.03 (手抄稿 第五冊 p127 L10)]

Instead of talking about Buddha Dharma, it is very obvious in the worldly matters – studying is the toughest task and requires monetary investment. However, everyone is willing to go for an education, why? Because we recognize this as the worldly "highest path." Well, by having heard more of this highest-level concept, everyone will want to take it. What about the actual advancement? It begins from the lower paths. Why? You begin from the lower paths, gradually the obstacles will be removed, and merits will slowly be accumulated. Once the obstacles are removed, your advancement is possible. While advancing, your merits are accumulated and your ability is enhanced.

[36B,17.36 (手抄稿 第五冊 p127 L14)]

When your ability is strengthened, there are several advantages: on one hand, you feel confident that you can advance and, on the other hand, your pure faith increases. By then you will find, well, this guidance is absolutely right! What is this pure faith? The purity part is to purify afflictions. Once the afflictions are purified, and the characteristic of Buddha Dharma is to purify afflictions. Upon purification, there must be a feeling of coolness and liberation. At that time, you will become truly happy – that is the Dharma joy, and this is your Dharma wealth. Wow! By then, your aspiration for virtue increases, your pure faith becomes enhanced, and then you will have the strength to advance stepwise. The more you advance the more engaged you become, the more interesting it gets the further you go! This experience has to be solidified through engagement, and it has to be strengthened from the lower paths. So the author taught us that this encompassing perception includes the highest goal in it, and guides us to advance from the lowest level, this is the most important, crucial fundamental aspect for studying Buddha Dharma. Often now, we are unable to grasp this point, so everyone is hastily trying to meditate. In the end, we are in great haste yet making no headway! Haste brings no success and makes waste! This is the biggest confusion we have now. Now, we have the understanding with the above guiding principle.

Let's read from the text:

[36B,19.02 (手抄稿 第五冊 p128 L11)]

English LR v.1 p.140

The *Questions of the Royal Lord of Formulae* uses the example of a skillful jeweler gradually refining a jewel in order to illustrate the need to guide the student's mind in stages. Wary of being verbose, I have not cited it in full here.

Regarding this guiding sequence, other than the above concept, the author also quotes a sutra. So what about this sutra? In this sutra, it says there is a skillful, wise silversmith, a jeweler refining a priceless precious Mani jewel by applying various methods. The author, wary of being verbose, does not describe it in full here. Actually, let's recall the earlier section [v.1 Chapter 6 p.114] about refuting misconceptions. In this section, it has already described very clearly. It mentions that there are specific steps to use water to wash [a precious metal] and fire to soften it, and then continue with this stepwise advancement to attain what we really seek. This concept corresponds to this section here; we can review it to understand. So this is the concept from the sutra, and then the text quotes from Bodhisattvas. It quotes from many Bodhisattvas and commentaries to validate:

[36B,20.40 (手抄稿 第五冊 p129 L5)]

The protector Nagarjuna also said to guide students in stages through the paths of high status and certain goodness:

This is from Bodhisattva Nagarjuna.

[36B,20.43 (手抄稿 第五冊 p129 L7)]

**Initially there are the teachings on high status;
Then come the teachings on certain goodness.
For, having obtained high status,
You gradually reach certain goodness.**

The stages of guidance come from the shared small capacity, which is high status, and it is followed by certain goodness. Certain goodness has two types: the certain goodness of the shared medium capacity and the specific certain goodness of the unshared great capacity. It has to be followed in this sequence, because when you attain the preceding high status, gradually you will surely attain certain goodness.

This is the explanation of the reasoning. So this comes from Bodhisattva Nagarjuna of the Profound View School. What is next?

[36B,21.28 (手抄稿 第五冊 p129 L13)]

Also, the noble being Asanga states:

This is from the Extensive Deeds lineage.

[36B,21.32 (手抄稿 第五冊 p130 L1)]

Further, bodhisattvas cause their disciples to accomplish the virtuous factor of enlightenment correctly and in stages.

So for Bodhisattvas to accumulate the virtuous factor, they first need to carefully observe those disciples they are guiding. How do they observe?

[36B,21.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p130 L3)]

In order to do this, they initially give easy teachings to beings of childlike wisdom, having them practice easy instructions and explications. When they recognize that these beings have become endowed with average wisdom, they have them practice average teachings and instructions, and average explications. When they recognize that these beings have become endowed with extensive wisdom, they have them practice profound teachings and instructions, and subtle explications. This is graduated flow of activity for the welfare of these living beings.

Asanga expressed the same as Nagarjuna, too. First, one needs to recognize the disposition of the subjects to be guided: for beginners or those with childlike wisdom, give him easy teachings that correspond to his level of learning and instruction. For those with average or extensive wisdom, enhance the profoundness and extensiveness of your teachings one step at a time. This is the systematic approach of a true

Bodhisattva who guides and who benefits sentient beings.

[36B,22.41 (手抄稿 第五冊 p130 L8)]

Also, Aryadeva's *Lamp Which Is a Compendium of Deeds* describes how you first train in the thought of the perfection vehicle and then enter the mantra vehicle.

Thus this Bodhisattva Aryadeva – also from the Profound View lineage – is a remarkable Bodhisattva. In this commentary, he also talked about the stages – first establish this so-called foundation that is shared by Mahayana, and then leading to the highest level of the unshared mantra vehicle.

[36B,23.17 (手抄稿 第五冊 p130 L11)]

It establishes that you must do so in stages. It then summarizes this point as follows:

**The method by which beings who are beginners
Engage in the ultimate purpose
Was said by the perfect Buddha
To be like the steps of a staircase.**

In short, all beginners – that is, those practitioners who have just started in this meditation practice – need to advance gradually to reach the unsurpassed, ultimate level. What did this “perfect Buddha” tell us to do? He

has a specific method; the method is like a staircase for advancing one step at a time.

[36B,23.55 (手抄稿 第五冊 p131 L2)]

English LR v.1 p.141

Also, the *Four Hundred Stanzas* states that the order of the path is definite:

So here it is the same, the author quotes from various scriptures to explain and to instruct us with the guidance of this system, which is definitely free from confusion. How was it said?

[36B,24.14 (手抄稿 第五冊 p131 L5)]

**Initially, you stop the nonmeritorious.
In the middle, you stop the misconception of self.
Finally, you put an end to all bad views;
One who knows this is an adept.**

“Stop the nonmeritorious,” this is the purpose of the shared small capacity: stop the nonmeritorious and engage in the meritorious activities. What merit should we engage in? Merit that lead us to high status. What is “stop the misconception of self”? That is the transcendence of cyclic existence, which is the middle capacity. And then? “Put an end to all bad views,” where self-of-the-person and self-of-the-phenomena are totally eliminated, just like that. This is the Mahayana path. In

this manner, these are the inevitable stages under skillful guidance.

[36B,24.46 (手抄稿 第五冊 p131 L9)]

This same instruction is given from various sources.

[36B,24.52 (手抄稿 第五冊 p131 L11)]

Also, the learned master Matrçeta said:

**It is like dyeing cloth that is free of stains:
First they develop goodness in the students' minds
Through discussions on generosity and the like,
And then they have them meditate on the teaching.**

According to this, first, “through discussions on generosity and the like”, this is the high status for the worldly, as well as the ones shared with the worldly. From here, go further into deeper and broader advancement.

[36B,25.15 (手抄稿 第五冊 p132 L1)]

Citing this passage, the great master Candrakirti also held that the path has a definite order.

There was another great debater, the great master Candrakirti who is also cited as validation for the explanation of these stages of the path. So regardless of

which lineage or school above – Profound View or Extensive Deeds – the key is that all the masters hold the same view without any exceptions, they all point out this important value. They all stating: theoretically it is such, sutras are such, commentaries are this way, and great masters’ instructions have no exceptions, their views all support these complete stages. From here, we experience one thing: the reason back then in India the teachings were like the sun at high noon, even as perfect as Venerable Atisha, he stated that every day an achiever would emerge, what is the cause? It was due to this encompassing teaching. So what about the present time? These stages represent the entire content of the perfect teaching: in terms of quality it may not be available; in terms of quantitative measurement it still may not necessarily be applicable. While speaking of the stages, if one emphasizes the stages and leave out quality and quantity, then there is no accessibility to this stage. One claims, “I am cooking rice now.” Without rice [the quality], what can you cook? At that time, if the rice is not yet washed, what can you do about it? So this [quality, quantity, and systematic order] has to be complete and all encompassing, thus Venerable Atisha can achieve such a perfect accomplishment. Hence for now, this is what we should have a true understanding of.

[36B,27.06 (手抄稿 第五冊 p132 L13)]

So up to here, I will just briefly mention that some might feel, “Alas! By doing so, it seems, well, too hard for us to achieve.” Certainly the practice is hard to achieve, this is absolutely the fact. The issue is not how

difficult it is, it is rather do you aspire to do it. Do you want to become Buddha? Do you want to resolve the study of the encompassing teaching? If you do, then, well! This is telling you the best, most accurate, and most complete path. Upon recognizing this path and abide by the stages, this is how it works. So the preceding sections have clearly taught us: if you take the guidance to the highest level, one will naturally become willing to advance on the path gradually. So the key is not, upon hearing the highest paths, that we become discouraged and stop right there. By explaining this highest level, we then will know: right! We should start working on it. This is the most important aspect. And then? When starting, one should begin from the lower paths. Because you take the lower paths, so your pure faith toward the highest path is increasing, and the understanding is also strengthened. Thus, you have more confidence, and can advance even further along. These are the accurate steps on the stage.

[36B,28.23 (手抄稿 第五冊 p133 L7)]

If you recognize this point, then in this situation, upon hearing this encompassing teaching, the first inevitable effect produced or formed toward this teaching is the feeling of absolutely cherishing it. You will wholeheartedly want to hear it, strive to understand it in its entirety. This is crucial. And as for the personal effort, practice as much as you are able to – apply what we can achieve immediately for now. Rather than doing it instantly, ah, I also want to be like him achieving instant Buddhahood. It is not like this. Or even by reading the *Biography of the Life of Milarepa*, sure! After

reading it, you might think: I also have to be like him and study the highest and quickest path! This should be the mental aspiration, because all Buddhas are advancing in this manner and, while advancing, such arrangement is the most accurate path that corresponds to us at the moment. For the stage itself provides perfect guidance to you, right? Thus, there will be an available entrance for you.

[37A00.16 (手抄稿 第五冊 p137 L1)]

If we are not sure about this point, that means we don't have complete understanding about the essence of the teachings. So at this juncture, the most important thing is that you need to listen to the teachings from all aspects so to understand it completely. By then, all the flaws will be taken care of. At that time, you will be very certain – advancing either on the higher or lower paths is fine. The ones taking the higher path will not despise those on the lower ones; whereas the ones taking the lower paths will not feel inferior because they are unable to take the higher paths. Everyone will advance joyfully this is how it works. Continuing:

[37A00.57 (手抄稿 第五冊 p137 L6)]

Since the order we use in guiding others along the path clearly is very crucial for their practice, reach firm certainty about this method.

Well, based on this realistic condition, Lama Tsongkha-pa noticed with thorough understanding and

recognized the fact to guide us to study Buddha Dharma systematically is critical! So for us practitioners, we should uphold it as the most precious and most crucial guidance! Keep these statements in mind. Now we should not be occupied by saying: alas, each day I have to read how many sutras, chant Buddha's name how many times, and complete how many prostrations to Buddha. That is great! Nothing wrong about it! However, if you are thinking of taking this complete, direct, and grand path, based on my current understanding, the best thing to do is to have a good understanding of this complete systematic order. And then, when you take it on, that will be "getting it done with half the effort"! This is using the idiom of "half the work, twice the effect"! In fact, when you apply effort little by little, the merits you receive will multiply unbelievably! That is just how it works! This task is of great importance. But before you have formed the uncontrived understanding, you don't need to hastily give up your existing practice, we refer to it as "riding on a horse while looking for a better one." Once you have a firm understanding of this concept, naturally you will feel composed in your mind, and make adjustment [to the existing practice].

[37A02.24 (手抄稿 第五冊 p138 L7)]

Why do you prostrate to Buddha or chant Buddha's name now? You claim the aspiration is to apply the teaching and to have achievement. So remember: if today your goal is just to do a few prostrations, that is fine, you just do that! After prostration, whatever the goal is isn't the concern, because your original purpose is to just prostrate! Or your original purpose is just chanting

those few words! Then you go ahead with the chanting, which is fine. If your goal is to be reborn to Pure Land, well, then you need to evaluate carefully: after my prostration or chanting, will I be able to fulfill the goal? If not, then you need to make adjustments! This is very obvious, isn't it? If your purpose is not only going to Pure Land, but also to achieve Buddhahood, that is one step further. This point is very important to us, too critical!

[37A02.59 (手抄稿 第五冊 p138 L13)]

Nowadays we engage in many things with our eyes shut, and we don't even realize it! Seeing other people doing something, I also follow suit, he chants and so do I. Moreover, I am doing it wrong, alas, I even teach others by saying this, "This is good, you follow me, I will teach you." Sigh, I now feel it is so absurd! To be honest, for me to teach everyone here, I am just like a recorder repeating what my teacher told me, a recording device for you folks to play back, I then repeat [what my teacher taught] accordingly. For actual teachings, I may not be qualified! So I do urge you all, don't think that you already know enough to teach others by saying: "Well, my way is better than yours!" If that is the case, you are far from being right! Now the primary importance for us is to grasp this point first, and follow it by advancing accordingly with the systematic order, and the advancement will be extremely quick, very swift, also with tremendous goodness.

[37A03.50 (手抄稿 第五冊 p139 L6)]

Well, now we have already encountered virtuous teachers in the beginning – once we have encountered virtuous teachers, by then we know, oh! What this virtuous teacher is actually telling us is not about encountering him, what is it about? It is about knowing yourself! Why? A true virtuous teacher will tell us: in order for you to obtain benefit from applying the teaching, one needs to achieve the human form of leisure and opportunity. Now surprisingly we have both, so such application is in our control. Hence, when it is time to practice, we should not be too hasty. If you hastily engage in it, even if you are inspired to meditate on the teaching, you may end up on a detour yet you don't even know it – that is, you are still staying on a path, but it is a detour. Later it will take you a long and winding turn to come back, it is not worth it! So in the very beginning, first recognize the map to the path, just like going for treasure hunt. It is not saying: Well, there is the treasure; I will go for it right away! After going for a while, where is the treasure? Very sorry, I don't know. Asking around, and probing for a while, yet you still have no clue at all, this is not how this teaching works!

[37A04.49 (手抄稿 第五冊 p139 L14)]

Initially, yes, the aspiration is needed. Then, first find the treasure map, after that, find out how to get there, and then bring the right tools and prepare the proper provisions. Once you have everything prepared, then you start on the road, and very quickly you will reach the tree of jewels. This applies to everything in the world without exceptions, isn't it? This concept we have to be clear on. So before we begin learning the small

scope, chapter 8 is about “the actual way to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.” Sure, taking full advantage of this leisure and opportunity human form and quickly apply the teaching! The author did not ask you to start immediately, wow, every day you have to prostrate to Buddha how many hundred times, every day you have to chant Buddha’s name how many times. Well, first one has to recognize the entire systematic order of the path of cultivation, once you have this recognition, then find your own feasible starting point and begin to practice. Thus, up to this point, it is the “actual way to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity.” Well, we are about to begin the actual application! Now, the text begins the actual session [of the three scopes].