



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

English Commentary Book 2, ver 1.0

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For use by students of the monastery only

Purpose:

This book contains the translation of Master Jih-Chang's commentary of the *Lamrim chapter 3 "How To Listen To And Explain The Teachings"*. It is for use by BW Monastery students only. It serves to facilitate students' understanding of the Lamrim as explained by Master Jih-Chang.

Student Feedback:

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

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CHAPTER 3 :
HOW TO LISTEN TO AND
EXPLAIN THE TEACHINGS

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[9A, 10.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 9 L12]

Let's turn to [page 55]. From the above, we understand that Buddha's teaching is akin to a precious jewel, and that a person of exceptionally high achievement has composed this treatise for us. The profound and marvelous Buddha's teachings are not easy for us to comprehend. However, through the commentaries of Bodhisattvas, Masters of the lineage, we are given the opportunity to understand the teachings with great clarity. Due to the different levels of attainment of these authors, the explanations may vary in depth, breadth or completeness. The author of this treatise was a Bodhisattva who possessed supreme spiritual qualities. Among the treatises he composed during his lifetime, this one is the most comprehensive and fundamental. As students of Buddhism, how are we to concord with such a complete and all-encompassing teaching? What kind of preparations do we need to undertake to ensure that we can fully reap the benefits of what is being offered to us? So there is a commonly known statement that Confucius once said: "All things can be accomplished with proper preparation." [Or "preparation makes things easier to accomplish"] In this mundane world, if you prepare, then things will turn out well. Thus, with respect to such auspicious teachings, how should we listen and explain in order to comply with the Dharma?

[9A, 13.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 10 L6]

I believe we all may have the following experience. If there is a seven-day retreat or a teaching somewhere, we would hurriedly drop the chores at home and run to the retreat. Yes, you might feel that, since this is such a rare opportunity, you must rearrange things and hurriedly make

arrangements for the next few days or seven days. But when we arrive at the event on the first day, [our minds] are not focused on the teachings because you have just left home and are still preoccupied with events at home. In addition, you are not familiar with this new environment. Even though you have let go of family matters, when everyone begins to chant, you don't even know what they are chanting and hastily try to find the chanting text. Likewise, we don't know how to prostrate or do things correctly. In the end, after seven days, you may figure out what to chant and [how to] prostrate. You may seemingly know how with understanding, but is the true meaning of the seven-day retreat simply for you to arrive there and learn how to take refuge in the Three Jewels? Is it just for you to learn how to prostrate to the Buddha? Of course not! Why? This is due to a lack of proper preparation. Provided that we have made the proper preparations in advance, [such as] learning the rules of the monastery and the true purpose of the seven day retreat, then, when you get there, you will be better prepared. By chanting wholeheartedly with undivided attention in the beginning, the effect is totally different. Actually, this principle applies to everything...yes, everything works the same way!

[9A, 14.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 11 L2]

Here, we often quote the following example and say that the Sixth Patriarch [the great Chinese Zen master Hui-neng] attained enlightenment as soon as he heard the teachings. Furthermore, when the Sixth Patriarch imparted the teachings to his students, they also gained realization after hearing. How could they do that, but why can't we [achieve the same]? [The way to understand] the text of the Sutra is the same, but why is there such great difference? The key point is this: for the

contents, if we properly read, study, reflect, discern, and practice accordingly, then understanding will follow. The text is easier to understand. But the reason for this systematic sequence and where the important points are, I will specifically clarify them here. Therefore, prior to a formal discussion and study of the Buddha Dharma, we should know how to explain and how to listen. With proper preparation, you will absolutely have great benefits from listening or explaining [the teachings].

[9A, 15.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 11 L9]

We often say, “Alas, nowadays, we cannot find a good Dharma Master, cannot find virtuous teachers, and cannot hear great teachings!” Yes, this is one of the reasons. But there is a more important reason – a lack of self-preparation, the mind is like a barren field. To prove this point, I will tell you two stories. During Buddha’s time, as recorded in the *Storehouse of Sundry Valuables*, there was an elderly monk who was ordained at older age. With learning Buddhism, it is more difficult at an older age than at a younger age – why? Genuine practice requires devoting all of one’s energy to study. However, this is not to say that you can’t accomplish anything when you’re older! Often, we have this worldly saying, ah, wait until retirement. By that time, it may be too late to study Buddha Dharma! You may not necessarily be able to engage with full vigor at a young age, and then, when you are older, will the hope still be there? But this old monk, he did not have any opportunity while he was young, yet he was endowed with virtuous roots and entered the door to Buddhism during his old age. Although he had a late start, this person had strong will and enthusiasm.

[9A, 16.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 12 L2]

Entering the Sangha community during Buddha's time, the Sangha consisted of people from all kinds of backgrounds. Many even showed sympathy and compassion towards those who are ordained at such an old age. However, there were some young monks [who] often saw him and [thought]: "Hey, this old guy is incapable of doing anything!" [The young monks] always made fun of him. But this old monk was very diligent, very respectful and very sincere. He was not like some of the worldly elders with terrible attitudes who took advantage of their seniority. This is a very terrible flaw; he was not like that! He also did not have any of the other bad habits of ordinary elders. He always felt that, after learning the Dharma, worldly experiences were not relevant, so he devoted his full energy to learning side-by-side with the younger monks. However, even though he had this mental preparation, the physical energy was not there. So he could not keep up with the others in all aspects. These young monks often made fun of him and played jokes on him. He always took the teasing submissively. Although others made fun of him, he sincerely listened to others mindfully.

[9A, 18.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 12 L10]

Once, the young monks were together and, upon seeing him, they decided to make fun of him: well, this old fellow, come, come, come, and let's poke fun at him. This happened very frequently. These young monks were joking with each other and, seeing this old monk come by, they pretended to be solemnly talking about the teachings. The old monk passed by, saw them discussing the teachings, and happily approached them. Upon getting closer, he paid respect with great care, and admired these young monks for explaining the

teachings. But these young monks were mischievous. Upon seeing him, they said, "Well, you are the elder senior monk, come, come, come!" There are several types of senior monks: in other words more senior in age, or based on ordained age. Or a monk more matured in wisdom, which means that even though he is young and he was ordained later in life and is endowed with great wisdom or is enlightened - this is called a wise senior monk. They made fun of him, because he was not only ordained later in life, but was older in age. Therefore [they] said, "Old senior monk, come, come, come! Welcome!" So he sat down and the young monks began explaining the teachings to him. The old monk was delighted and happy! But these young fellows were laughing inside, "This old fellow always falls for it." So it continued. Then a young monk said, "Come, come, come! We will help you to attain the Four Fruits*. Buddha taught us that Dharma requires experiential attainment!" The old monk was very happy and delighted. "Good, you sit in that corner!" So, the old monk sat in the corner very respectfully.

[*Four Fruits = four levels of Arhatship (no longer subjected to rebirth in samsara): stream-enterer (srotapanna), once-returner, non-returner (agnagamin) and arhat (lohan)]

[9A, 19.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 13 L7]

One of the young monks took a whip, much like the wooden incense slab we use in the meditation room nowadays, and "pa!" knocked the old monk's head once. "Good, this is to bless you so you may attain the stream-enterer's level – the First Fruit." This was completely in jest, but the elder listened to them with complete respect and one-pointed attention. As a result, with this one knock, the old

monk truly attained the First Fruit. Wow, he was delighted! The young monks were happy making fun of him. This old monk, because of his enlightenment, well! Very respectfully and happily, came down from his seat and thanked them. So, everyone was happy, but for different reasons. Then, the young monks said, "Well, you don't need to rush, this is only the First Fruit; there is the Second Fruit." "Great, good, good!" [The old monk] ran to the corner. The young monks were laughing riotously in the back, thinking how can this old fellow be so muddleheaded and continue to fall for the trick while being so happy? The old monk was truly delighted; upon such attainment, [who] would not be joyful? To be liberated from cyclic existence and see the direction of the path, [he] mindfully and respectfully ran from this corner to the other. Then, another person took the incense slab, "keng," hit his head again, saying, "Blessing you to give you the Second Fruit!" And just like that, he attained the Second Fruit. So on and so forth, they knocked [his head] four times at the four corners [of the room] and [this old monk] attained the Four Fruits of Arhatship.

[9A, 20.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 14 L3]

You can go read it; it is a true story. What does this mean? It means mental intention is very important, too important! That is, [the old monk's] inner qualities had matured. Buddha Dharma tells us in all aspects - mind training, mind training! You learn the teaching, and then purify the mental intention within yourself. Now our biggest problem is: after learning the Dharma, [we] then view others through a demonic mirror; [we] consider everyone else as a demon. In addition, the ego of the self inflates as [we] learn more, and that inflated [sense of pride] gets out of control! Everywhere

[we] go, [we] find others' faults, fault-find in others. There is only one spot that cannot be seen; the spot that should be seen [our inner self] is overlooked. All of these - are wrong. The actual issue is proper preparation. In other words, from the beginning we don't understand the specific characteristics of the Dharma; this is very pitiful, or it could be considered as a very absurd situation. So it tells us specifically that we shouldn't hastily seek great teachings. At this juncture, if you can transform your mind, then the teachings that follow will be beneficial, and the benefit will be instantaneous! Thus, in this section, prior to hearing [the teachings], the text first tells us how to listen - how to listen to and explain the teachings.

[9A, 22.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 14 L13]

III. How to listen to and explain the teachings

A. How to listen to a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great

With regard to listening to Buddha's teachings, what are the proper criteria? Why listen in this way? Here, to clarify it again: everybody, don't [just] emphasize reasoning! Everyone, listen to the concept, examine it closely as to whether your mind is in accordance with it. If so, then [we] are on the right track. Otherwise, we will deviate further and further from the path! The second:

[9A, 22.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 15 L2]

B. How to explain a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great

C. How a session should be concluded in relation to both hearing and explaining the teaching

How to explain and why listen first and then explain? You first listen, understand it for yourself and absorb the teachings, then explain the teachings to others. Now, we are unable to understand the teaching, but we preach [the teachings] to others first, this is a great pity! Once you have understood [the teachings through proper listening], and then explain [the teachings] to others. Only then will it be complete; benefitting self and others can both be complete. It is the same here - upon completion, what should be done? Within the same teaching assembly, here, how to listen is further divided into three parts:

[9A, 23.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 15 L7]

A. How to listen to a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great

How to listen to the teachings is explained in three parts:

- 1. Contemplating the benefits of hearing the teaching**
- 2. Developing reverence for the teaching and the instructor**
- 3. How you actually listen**

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[9A, 24.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 16 L6]

1. Contemplating the benefits of hearing the teaching

Listening to the teaching is further divided into three steps. First, it tells us to “contemplate,” that is, to analyze, reflect, and review mindfully, “What are the specific benefits of hearing the teachings?” This is very important. We often feel that we are perfectly fine in our comfort zones, comfortable and content, why need to listen to the teachings? Even if the teachings were given to us, we won’t necessarily want to listen! While listening to the readily available teachings, we

feel, “Well, his explanation is wrong, mine is correct, what’s the big deal about his teaching? I know that too!” This state of mind absolutely does not correspond with the teachings and is totally not aligned, not properly aligned at all! First, you should consider, what are the benefits of listening to the teachings? Subsequently, what are the faults of not listening to the teachings? At that time, there will be a driving force within your mind to do it wholeheartedly. In fact, our minds are often filled with all sorts of afflictions. If you lack preparation, [you will] very easily be dominated by afflictions - although you are sitting in a Dharma assembly, your mind resonates with afflictions. As a result, if you listen to the teachings under these circumstances, it will harm you. It will be covered in detail later. Why would listening to the teachings harm you? As mentioned earlier, upon hearing the teachings, if you do not apply it for self-purification, then afflictions will increase; this is the reason. Therefore, if you listen to the great benefits of hearing the teachings, you will be wholeheartedly encouraged, motivated to learn the teaching.

Then what is next? This is the attitude toward the teachings. What about the instructor who imparts the teachings? [Towards them we should] develop reverence and veneration. We should develop sincere respect; more explanations will follow. If you have prepared in this way, then the next step is how to actually listen. There are reasons for the particular order of these steps and we must follow them, [we] have to abide by them! The benefit is yours by following it, your benefit increases according to the effort you put in. Therefore, every step from here on absolutely has great meaning for us! To genuinely follow it, this is the true benefit

for us. Now let's see, what are the benefits of hearing the teachings?

[9A, 25.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 16 L12]
The Verses about Hearing (Sruti-varga) in the Collection of Indicative Verses (Udana-varga) says:

This was written by Bodhisattva Nagarjuna.

**Through hearing, phenomena are understood,
Through hearing, wrongdoing is overcome,
Through hearing, what is meaningless is eliminated,
Through hearing, nirvana is attained.**

[9A, 25.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 16 L14]

The meaning of these four verses seems simple enough - you understand phenomena through listening to the teaching. Here, phenomena include everything. All phenomena are understood through hearing. It is not really [as simple as you think] there is a special meaning here. Buddha taught us with a specific goal in mind. If we cannot accord to that particular goal, then it is all an elaboration of words. Saying that it is an elaboration of words is a euphemism for another term - "demonic activity." What is the difference between the Buddha and a demon? They are total opposites. Buddha salvages us from cyclic existence, points out the faults in our minds, helps us understand what is wrong, and [shows us] how to become enlightened. Through enlightenment, we will be liberated from suffering. Not the demon! The demon is the complete opposite, and specializes in bringing you down. When we want to correctly understand Dharma, we should be aware of this. If you understand this point but do not act in accordance with it then your path is meaningless and it is a mere

elaboration of words. So it is not about claiming we know a lot. In many circumstances, upon hearing [the teaching, we think]: “wow, [I] know all of this” and have no further interest in it. Or, regarding his teaching, you have your own view. This attitude is very awful, truly terrible.

[9A, 27.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 17 L11]

Here it says, "Through hearing, phenomena are understood." What is the specific meaning of this phrase? It is [for us] to find the genuine correct view and to understand the characteristic of the teaching, to comprehend the characteristic of the Dharma. It doesn't mean that we are completely clueless; we do know what this is called, what that is called. We say a whole lot, but are there any direct correlation with our suffering and happiness?

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[9B, 01.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 19 L1]

There is no direct relationship [between worldly phenomena and true happiness]. For the majority of the things we engage in, the more we know, the more we are trapped by the contaminated information and we generate more afflictions – so it would be better off not to know! Therefore, what the author really tells us here is that we should obtain the proper perception through hearing the teachings. Proper perception is telling you how to distinguish the key difference between ignorance and enlightenment: what is right or what is wrong and for us to know the difference between internal [Buddhist philosophy] and external [non-Buddhist philosophy]. Furthermore, the internal means the Buddha's path. Within Buddha's path, [you should understand] the differences between Mahayana and Hinayana, and even the differences

between sects. This way you will know what should be done and what should be avoided, what to adopt and what to cast aside, etc., and be able to clearly distinguish [between these]. As for the essence of what to adopt and what to cast aside – the bottom line is what is in our mental stream. Through observing the myriad of phenomena in the external world to gradually comprehend this point [that all phenomena are projections of the mind] is truly crucial. This [understanding] must arise from hearing, must permeate through hearing, this is important! In other words, [this importance] goes from understanding the phenomena all the way to ultimate perfection, all the way.

[9B, 01.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 19 L9]

Next, there are three steps: “Through hearing, wrongdoing is overcome. Through hearing, what is meaningless is eliminated. Through hearing, nirvana is attained.” Ordinarily, due to our lack of understanding, we busy ourselves at length vigorously. After all the busy effort, we end up engaging in an elaboration of words, continuously cycling in cyclic existence. How meaningless! Buddha Dharma taught us very precisely that you have to recognize the key point, and then distinguish what to adopt and what to cast aside. So [we should] cast aside what is detrimental to us and endeavor to do what is beneficial. If you are able to do so and once understood, and with regards to what you should not do – [these are] avoided; you engage in what should be done, and then you can advance [spiritually]. Thus, we can eliminate non-virtuous karma, which actually is one way to accumulate virtuous merits. What does this specifically refer to? It refers to ethical discipline. All day and night we are bound by the karma of ignorance, and this is the starting point, the main focus is all

based on ethical discipline – to be freed from nonvirtuous karma, and completely escape from it.

[9B, 02.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 20 L8]

Furthermore, being freed from [nonvirtuous karma] is only the very first step. The next step is to tame the manifestation of affliction, tame the arising affliction. Therefore, “through hearing, what is meaningless is eliminated.” Non-virtuous action is inclined toward harm; even though we are not engaging in non-virtue, the things we are doing, with regards to truly and thoroughly resolving this issue, may not be significant or meaningful. In many instances, they are either ethically neutral or an elaboration of words. Thus, the next step is to eliminate what is meaningless. This is specifically referred to as “meditative concentration” - to tame the arising affliction. Once it is tamed, the final step is to eradicate the seeds [of affliction] and therefore “attain nirvana” – these are the systematic steps. The essence of Buddha Dharma relies on these key steps!

[9B, 03.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 20 L14]

So everyone, this concept [of how to listen] should be very clear, obvious, and apparent. So don't say, Oh, I am cultivating now! You should examine your progress after studying for so long – are your afflictions decreasing or increasing? If your afflictions are increasing, then whatever you are doing is incorrect. Don't say, “I am right, he is wrong!” Alas, you don't even know how wrong you have been! No matter how much you know, how good you are at the Dharma instrument, or how flexible your legs are in the meditative posture, even if you attained meditative stability, these are of no use! We need to grasp the specific characteristics of

Buddha Dharma. What must this depend on? It depends on listening, hearing [the teachings]!

[9B, 04.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 21 L5]

Also:

**Just as someone dwelling inside a house,
Enshrouded in complete darkness,
Has eyes but does not see
The forms that are there.**

The next quote: There is a house that is covered up very well. Thus, it is pitch dark inside and one cannot see anything. Although there are many beautiful decorations, without light, even with eyes, you cannot see anything. This is obvious. In this room, if we seal it by building walls all around it, then it would be as if we were inside a dark hell, unable to see anything. What does this say then? Just like us humans, if we do not have guidance from an enlightened being, even with eyes, we cannot see true reality in the long nights of ignorance. Therefore:

[9B, 05.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 21 L12]

**So, also, a person born of noble lineage,
Although possessing intelligence,
Does not know until told
What is virtuous and what is not.**

Right now we are in the midst of the three realms [desire, form, and formless realms]. We have this human form. We are not going to talk about animals because they do not have the ability to distinguish right from wrong and the deities are too happy to be bothered with distinguishing [right from wrong]. Humans are the only ones that possess such intelligence and

this intelligence is at the level of the mundane world. Without listening to the teachings from an enlightened being, it is hard to distinguish virtue from non-virtue. This discernment is a supramundane skill, not a mundane skill. The worldly virtuous and non-virtuous standards are only to maintain a stable society. By engaging in virtuous deeds, one is called a good person in this world, and they are praised and encouraged. Does this praise have value? Yes, it lasts several decades. Then upon death when one is migrating to another realm, this [worldly] value becomes completely useless. For instance, now we stay here and feel good about this place, but moving to another place isn't necessarily a good thing! So the value of virtue and non-virtue is only within our circle.

[9B, 06.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 22 L6]

Whereas now, what does virtue and non-virtue mean in Buddhism? It is measured by the standard of the Buddha Dharma. Virtuous deeds enable you to advance, to continuously advance. However, there is contaminated and uncontaminated virtue. Contaminated virtue is in the realms of humans and deities. In order [for us] to achieve uncontaminated virtue, [we] must be liberated beyond the three realms. As for non-virtuous deeds, in the same way, they lead to your downfall, fall from virtue. With respect to contaminated and uncontaminated, contaminated kind deeds are non-virtuous; contaminated virtue is also non-virtuous because [this type of karma will] still bring about your cyclic existence. That is how it works! Therefore, only through hearing the teachings can we truly understand what virtue and non-virtue are, and what will enable [us to] escape from cyclic existence to be liberated from the suffering of birth and death.

[9B, 07.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 22 L12]

Just as one with eyes

Sees forms by using a lamp,

So through hearing what is virtuous and what is not,

You will understand what should be done.

A moment ago, [I said that] in this house, even though you have eyes, it is pitch dark and you cannot see anything. Now there is light, hey! With it you can see all kinds of wonderful things inside the house. Similarly, because someone has taught you, you are able to distinguish virtue from non-virtue. Therefore, you are able to know what to adopt and what to discard, what to do away with and what to engage in. Next is a quote from the *Garland of Birth Stories*. It describes the life stories of Buddha [over several lifetimes]. Some stories are told by Buddha himself and other stories [as described by the Buddha] were recorded later by Bodhisattvas. Overall, the contents are in accordance with each other. It says:

[9B, 08.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 23 L4]

Also, the *Garland of Birth Stories (Jataka-mala)* says:

Through hearing, you become faithful

And your delight in virtue becomes steadfast;

Wisdom arises and delusion will vanish—

This is worth buying even with your flesh.

Now, in this case, so if [we] say: due to listening to the teaching, we can “become faithful.” This “faith” needs to be explained here. Upon hearing Buddha Dharma, just listening and then letting it pass by is useless! After your listening a type of mentality can be inspired. The mentality is a state of mind – faith. This kind of faith is described in the sutra either

as “purification of the mind to have faith” or “the mind purified to have faith,” – whether the first two characters [purify and mind] are reversed or not does not matter. Either purified mind or mind purification, it does not matter! Often, we refer to faith as - I believe, I have faith. This is the first step required for us beginners to start learning the Buddha Dharma. What do you believe in? [We] believe in Buddha. But is this the level of faith that we are talking about? No. The common understanding of faith is the cause of the belief described in the text. [When the level of belief in the text] has been reached, then the proper effects will arise. There are many ways to describe this faith. Now, we are based on the mind-only school [“true aspectarian,” or conscious-only 唯識], and the frame of reference may vary, but the general idea is not far off.

[9B, 09.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 24 L1]

The mind-only school says, “regarding the truth of reality [the Four Noble Truths], good qualities [the three Jewels] and abilities [the cause and effect]; with the certitude of forbearance and the nature of pure mind.” For those with true good qualities and abilities, they will be explained one by one later; in other words, what does this mean? The three Jewels are substantial, whereas the worldly involvement is full of flaws. Only the three Jewels have the merits to benefit self and others; they have the ability to inspire all sorts of conventional and ultimate effects. With this regard – if this teaching and this logic can profoundly endure in your mind and [then you] say: “wow, this is how it works!” Due to this certitude of conviction in your mind, you will cultivate a determined and persistent attitude. With this attitude, you will feel illuminated and calm. The formation of this kind of mind stream is called faith. So for this faith, if [you are] truly

endowed with full-fledged faith, and the above are the qualifications.

[9B, 10.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 24 L8]

Let's discuss this topic in simpler terms. We can do a quick self-assessment to see whether this mentality [from the mind-only school described above] is fulfilled. For example, right now some little event happens. If you have faith in Buddha Dharma, you should be able to apply the Dharma for purification, and afflictions would not arise from within. For instance, in our kitchen, today the dishes do not suit you and this thought arises from within: it doesn't match [my] taste! Or, someone made one statement to you and caused dissatisfaction in your mind. On the other hand, you pick on another person and consider him to be incapable, not good enough! Although [we] have listened to the teaching, [we] still circle around in dispute. Sorry! Not to mention talking about this useless attitude of laypeople, even for monastics, even for a one hundred-year old senior monk, it is completely useless – that is, there is no purification of the mind; [the mind is] just dominated by the afflictions. What should the specific characteristic be? [It should be] purifying the mind with conviction. That is, Buddha Dharma was originally for your physical and mental purification – upon encountering a situation, you will know what is right from wrong and what should be adopted and what should be discarded. Clearly distinguish in your mind – this arising condition that happened just now is the sign of affliction and this is a mistaken discrimination; you should recognize it to be unmistakably clear. Then you won't engage in what you should not be doing and you will engage in things that you should be doing. With

complete concordance with this attitude, mindfully advance without wavering – this is [faith].

[9B, 11.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 25 L4]

If you truly have pure faith, the dishes in the kitchen today may not suit your taste, it may not even be nutritious. The way I understand the Buddha Dharma is that today, the food does not suit my taste; the Dharma has told me what should be done and, applying it accordingly, I will eat it today. If I die because of the food, I may just happen to be reborn in the deity realm. If your goal is to be reborn to Pure Land, then you dedicate accordingly. The worry should be that you would not die and once you are dead, you will go [to the designated rebirth]. This samsaric world lacks redeeming qualities! You will not [think]: “alas, this is not right, that won’t work!” and whine about it for a couple days. These are all obvious and clear. However, here it is not asking us to transform it [right away]. I point out this attitude for us to examine our minds. Once this is understood, set it as the goal and advance step by step; this is truly important. I want to especially clarify this point.

[9B, 12.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 25 L11]

What does all of this require? Listening to the teachings! In other words, this is the goal of listening to the teachings. On the contrary, it does not mean that, after listening to the Buddha Dharma, well, we stubbornly cling to the self: “this is right and that is wrong.” This is not true cultivation of your pure faith. Upon listening to the teaching, the right thing to do is to apply it to internalize the purification! By then, when you do it correctly, you will develop pure faith.

[9B, 13.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 25 L15]

What effect will these situations give rise to? Well! “Your delight in virtue becomes steadfast.” At that time, this delight is a wondrous delight. Usually, after we listen to the teachings, well, we are very joyous and filled with Dharma Bliss! Now, this Dharma bliss is enhanced with the word “wonderful,” and this has a great reason. For example, we are here now listening to something other than Buddha Dharma, such as listening to a story or whatever. We will listen with our eyes wide open and with much joy, perhaps even more joyful [than when listening to the teaching]! While listening to Buddha Dharma, you listen while dozing off. But, when you listen to that story; you are very enthusiastic and really into it. For the same joy, what is the difference? Often, when we speak of or hear the teachings, we feel: “well! Very good” [we are] filled with Dharma Bliss – this may not be the case! Upon hearing the teachings, if it identifies your affliction from within, you recognize it, and are able to purify the affliction; this kind of wonderful delight is in concordance with the Buddha Dharma. It is called “brilliant Dharma delight.” This delight is wondrous delight. This is not saying that today you are capable of great, flowery speeches that people will listen to with great interest, and days later will still linger in their minds. These effects may not necessarily purify our afflictions. Sorry, but this is not true Dharma Bliss.

[9B, 14.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 26 L11]

Genuine Dharma Bliss has a kind of “wondrousness” to it. What is its effect? “Your virtue becomes steadfast.” You will be able to focus on Dharma and not be swayed! That is called steadfast! Otherwise, upon hearing, even though the teaching is very logical for you to remove afflictions, once a small

situation arises, alas! Pre-occupied by attachment, hostility, and ignorance [the 3 mental poisons], [you are] unable to dwell on the teaching and unable to be steadfast. Therefore, in this kind of situation, if [you are] able to start from the beginning, to recognize the appearance [of afflictions] in the mind stream through your contemplation and experiential application, in the end, even if the three thousand world-systems are destroyed by the fire of the eon, you will maintain stability in the Quiescent-Light [see book 1 Introduction: 常寂光淨土 Land-of-Eternally-Quiescent-Light]. These are the proper steps: begin from proper listening. So, everyone please remember when studying Buddha Dharma, there are four major principles and nine steps*, please be aware. That is, upon hearing, you obtain the true “wisdom” of Buddha Dharma, the special characteristic of wisdom. At that time, it is appropriate to have this delight, and then steadfastness is attained. What is the characteristic [of this delight]? [It is] “the cultivated wisdom that lacks ignorance!” Wow, a “lack of ignorance”! That is the cultivation of your wisdom; wisdom is the direct antidote that removes afflictions.

[*There are a few possible valid interpretations of what these 4 principles and 9 steps are, but since late Master did not explain in detail here, we earnestly pray to all teachers in the lineage to provide more guidance.

One interpretation from Monks for the 4 principles can be referred on v.1 p.192: rely on excellent persons, listen to the sublime teachings, and fix your attention properly on them, cultivate a practice that conforms with the teachings.]

[9B, 16.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 27 L5]

Often, you are delighted about something that you heard and understood, and then you explain it to others. Wow! You explain to others in a way that is pleasant to listen to – [seemingly] and you have so many disciples! For planting a seed, this is very good, but it is still far away from Buddha Dharma, still distant from the teaching. To attain wisdom in this manner; gradually, with this method you are still outside the door [to Buddhism], still clueless as to where the entrance is. This is what we need to realize.

[9B, 16.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 27 L8]

By that time you don't have any foolishness. The characteristic of foolishness has another name known as ignorance. In this situation, "buying even with your own flesh," buying with your own flesh becomes reasonable! This is not to say that we should work a little bit harder and sigh - feeling that it is extremely difficult. This is totally wrong, absolutely wrong! Therefore, constantly remember this verse, you can earnestly analyze, observe, and contemplate deeply and extensively. Let's not overlook that Buddha sacrificed his physical form life after life for the Dharma; great teachers also sought teachings across great distances and through great hardship. Therefore, Buddha told us to buy [it] with our own flesh, for that is what Buddha actually did. Due to his willingness to do so, he achieved Buddhahood. Great teachers, due to their willingness to travel afar for the teachings, achieved their Bodhisattva status. Whereas for us, with the teachings presented in front [of us] the willingness is not there. Upon hearing it, more non-virtues are created. This is how we ordinary beings are! We should clearly recognize

this concept. The text below is easy to understand. I will just read it without going into detail.

[9B, 17.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 28 L2]

**Hearing is a lamp that dispels the darkness of delusion,
The supreme wealth that cannot be carried off by thieves,**

This Dharma treasure resonates with your mind-stream; bandits or thieves cannot steal it.

[9B, 17.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 28 L4]

**A weapon that vanquishes the foe of confusion;
It is the best of friends, revealing personal instructions, the techniques of method.**

This weapon to vanquish confusion – the confusion is our ignorance. This ignorance is actually our true enemy. We used to say “me, me, me”, my views, my habits, oh well, I like this, I that – this [mentality] is our enemy! But we don’t realize it. Why? We are confused, and it is [our] ignorance. Everyone’s true enemy is not external; others cannot harm you. When I was first ordained, the first teacher I relied on often told me, “so and so, others cannot harm you! They cannot harm you!” As a newly ordained monk, it is inevitable to not be in accord with the teaching. When I just entered [the monastery], everyone saw that everyone else still had a lot of latent habits. So you would glare at me and I would stare back at you; you would snap at him, I would snap back at you. [We are] constantly embroiled in this day and night.

[9B, 18.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 28 L13]

Thus, I am indebted to my virtuous teacher, I always feel thankful to the virtuous teacher! He told me several times, “so and so, others cannot do you harm! They cannot harm you!” Later, he added another comment, “What can actually harm you is yourself” At that time, I did not understand; now, I know and I gradually understood. I do hope that you will understand this sooner, recognize it sooner. If someone criticizes you, you will grumble for three days. You discern it incorrectly due to ignorance! Wouldn't it be better to leave [that person] alone? If you understand the teaching, whatever others say about you, if he is right, you should be grateful to him because he spoke up so you can improve! If he is wrong, then it is just right for you to practice forbearance - wouldn't that increase your merits? There can't be a better opportunity either way; these situations are all your virtuous teachers. However, you don't view it this way, rather, you grumble in your mind. Thus, others can't actually harm you; you are the one harming yourself! Why? Ignorance! You took in what should not be believed, this is the root cause; this is the basis of the mistake. So now, apply the teachings as a remedy and, therefore, “it is the best of friends, revealing personal instructions, the techniques of method.”

[9B, 19.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 29 L8]
It is the friend who does not desert you in times of need,

Therefore a practitioner may be deficient in wealth but not in the teachings! Well, this deficiency has great benefit to us!

[9B, 20.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 29 L10]
A harmless medicine for the illness of sorrow,

**The supreme battalion to vanquish the troops of great misdeeds,
It is the best fame, glory, and treasure.
It is the supreme gift when you meet with noble beings.
Among an assemblage, it delights the wise.**

This part can be studied on your own. Next, the last verse let's listen to it and it is very logical.

Also:

English LR v.1 p.57

[9B, 20.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 29 L13]

**The result of hearing is to engage in substantive practice;
You will be released with little difficulty from the fortress of rebirth.**

Ah! These passages are beautiful beyond description! I am constantly mindful of them and contemplate them whenever available. [During] your study of Buddha Dharma, if you can listen properly, this listening is very important. But, prior to this listening, there must be a condition. I believe everyone knows it – [we] talked about it earlier and it will be explained in detail later. First, you should rely on a virtuous teacher and properly listen to the teachings - this is the first requirement. Next, after hearing the proper application, followed by “engaging in substantive practice,” the teaching needs to be applied accordingly. Normally, our minds are like rawhide. When others give you advice, there is strong resistance! When someone tells us, “[You] tell me this, what about you?” This is of no help. In this situation, definitely do

not look for a virtuous teacher! For non-virtuous acquaintances, they fight and, one way or another, they all have the seeds to be hell-bound, [they are] fearless. If you meet virtuous teachers with this attitude, you will certainly fall [into the miserable realms]! I am not making this up, you should refer to the scriptural teachings for what they are trying to tell us, this will be covered later in detail, and I just mentioned it briefly here. When a virtuous teacher talks to you with proper reasoning, if you even have one thought of hostility, then you will fall into the hell realms for many lifetimes, or [you will be] reborn as an animal, it is this dreadful!

[9B, 21.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 30 L11]

The reason that the Buddha does not appear in this world is not because of a lack of compassion. If he comes, you will definitely be sent to hell, it is that serious! The reason actually is very simple. Right now, we are so careless and rough, [if] you randomly mess up it does not matter - in any case, [we are] careless and rough. If this place is filled with delicate items, with your careless bump, anything that falls is priceless; this is very obvious! You will harm yourself as well as hurt others. It is like a child inside a house, falling and tumbling around does not matter. [But] if he bumps into these priceless items in here, [you] absolutely would not let [any] children in. Furthermore, with electricity, if you let the child touch something very dangerous, he would get hurt, too. This is very clear and obvious. So transform accordingly is needed.

[9B, 22.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 31 L3]

Hence, how do we transform? Why can't we turn our minds around? When we hear a reasonable concept, great! At the moment of hearing we are very pleased and listen with

great joy. Once the book is closed, [everything you read] returns to the book again, it goes back into the book again. [Nowadays] it is easier because of the [replay device], so [we] can listen to it again. After you listening to it, [the concept] hasn't transformed yet. Later, [the text] will teach us how to transform, which is very important! This transformation process comes from contemplation. Thus, this time I mention it specifically: the reason to have rigorous requirement is [to help us transform]. If you just want to listen [without application], there will be other opportunities later - for those who are not ready, there is no need to listen to this yet, [this advice] is very sincere. I will continue to teach, [if you] are unprepared then be prepared before coming back; by that time, great benefits will arise.

[9B, 23.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 31 L10]

[I] always wish that, after hearing the teaching this time, everyone can transform accordingly. In order to transform, we have to adjust our entire lifestyle to match [the path of transformation]. This is one of the reasons. When that time comes, you will be able to transcend and practice accordingly; otherwise we will never do so! Actually, the three steps are: hearing, contemplation, and meditation. As for “transformation,” the key is contemplation. Once you have contemplated with proper analysis, the transformation will take place and transcendence will happen. Often, the reason why we are unable to transform is this [lack of contemplation]. As for this point, later, in the karma section, it will be explained specifically. From where does this karma arise? What are the characteristics of karma? We have talked about it for a long time without truly understanding it. In fact, the key is the mental ability to contemplate. If you can apply accordingly,

with “little difficulty” – you do not need a lot of effort to “leave the fortress of rebirth.” Right now, we put in a lot of effort, alas, wasted a lot of effort, yet still wind up falling into hell and suffering. How unworthwhile! If you take this approach and apply it to chanting Buddha’s name, then certainly, ten thousand people applying it accordingly [they] would become accomplished. Great Teachers would never deceive us, and this is absolutely true! Even ordination is not needed; if you properly practiced as a lay-practitioner, the achievement will be there, too. Such great benefits! The key is right here.

[9B, 24.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 32 L6]
Develop enthusiasm from the depths of your heart with regard to these benefits of hearing.

So we know the first step is to rely on hearing. When we first begin, we must have certainty about the benefits of hearing the teachings. Where does this certainty arise? From hearing and contemplating! This is the first thing that we should strive for now. Never say, “Alas, I want to hurry up and learn meditative concentration. I want to hurry up and learn this and learn that.” No! [We] need to cultivate certainty about the teaching. Once this unshakable certainty is generated, devote [your] entire energy, and then there is definitely hope. Especially now, Buddha taught us a guaranteed method of the Pure Land teaching: if 10,000 people practice and 10,000 will be able to go there. It is that assured and safe! Let’s continue. Other than this specific teaching, there is something else that [we] should prepare for.

[9B, 25.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 32 L13]

Moreover, Asanga's *Bodhisattva Levels (Bodhisattva-bhumi)* says

Prior to listening, we should be prepared ahead of time. This is discussed in the *Levels of Yogic Deeds*. In the chapter of *The Bodhisattva Levels*, there are seventeen levels. They are the *five consciousness associated with the body level, mental intent level*, and then there is the *investigation and analysis level*, etc. This is a great commentary! Up till this point, I often feel so anxious and totally helpless. When I see you all chatting nonsense whenever there is some free time, I really feel regretful for everyone! It is not just for you, but for me as well. I feel that I did not know to study hard while I was young and now that I am older, I just feel that there is not enough time. I just wish that, in this situation, if I could have ninety-six hours a day totally devoted to study, it still would not be enough. Amazingly, I found that there is so much precious time spent sitting and chatting like there is nothing to do. Moreover, once you sit and relax in a cool place, alas, very pitiful! Such a rare precious and priceless life of leisure and opportunity is wasted like this. Small talk generates more negativity. [We] should read these types of good books carefully – and the benefits will absolutely be ours. Great benefits! I just wanted to bring it [to your attention]. Regarding many important concepts, they are clearly discussed [in this commentary]. [I] will just mention it in passing. In *The Bodhisattva Levels*, the seventeen levels say:

[9B, 26.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 33 L11]
That you should listen with five ideas in mind;

Prior to listening to Buddha Dharma, you should be prepared to have understanding of the mental recognition of

these five ideas. Afterwards if you listen with this mindset, then you will receive the benefits. What are the five ideas? Next:

[9B, 27.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 33 L14]
that is, with (1) the idea of a jewel, due to the fact that the teachings are rare because Buddhas seldom appear nor do their teachings;

It is not easy for Buddha to appear in this world. It is very rare! Buddhas are rare, and so is Dharma. To achieve Buddhahood it takes three great eons. In fact, to be precise, it takes immeasurable eons. This duration of time is not something rare. We all have gone through immeasurable eons [in cyclic existence], and they are impossible to count. All of us are of no exception. So, relying on the duration of time is of no use!

English LR v.1 p.57

[10A, 00.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 37 L1]

There is not a single person that does not have to go through immeasurable eons. This is intrinsically impossible to calculate. Every person is the same, so whatever the length of the time, it does not matter. Why? The practitioner has to apply long-term practice. This cultivation is filled with hardship, serious hardship! Let's relate to this condition: Today, you were told to do a bit more work. Alas, you can't handle it, and you are unwilling to take it. You are told to eat less and you are reluctant to do so. When you are inconvenienced a bit, you are reluctant. Whereas now, I will take on all hardships, give others all the credit, and endure all sorts of grievances on

my own. This is not easy right? Certainly, it is not easy! It isn't easy for us to take on this suffering for even one day, or even one year – we can't handle it. Buddha endured this for immeasurable eons! Not just one Buddha alone, there are many other supporting ones! For a Buddha to attain Buddhahood within a given community, like when our Buddha Shakyamuni came into this world, one single Buddha was of no great influence, it also required many Bodhisattva disciples. Each one of them experienced the same process of practice. At that time, when the fulfillment of self and others are perfected and then Buddha will appear in the world. So this is rare, extremely rare, and very difficult!

[10A, 01.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 37 L9]

For us now, to expend a little effort to dig for treasure and find a diamond; wow, [we] feel that it is extremely precious. In comparison to Buddha, the diamond is worth less than garbage! Even if you were bestowed with the three thousand world systems, there is nothing that compares to it – it is that rare! The Buddha is rare and the Dharma is the same. In fact, the teachings are even more difficult to come by than the Buddha, why? When Buddha came to this world, he spoke clearly and gave many teachings. He told Ananda – he scooped up some soil and said, “Ananda, which do you see has more soil, my hand or the ground?” [Ananda replied,] “Of course there is more soil on the ground.” Buddha said, “What I have taught is only as much as what is in my hand; what I have not taught is as much as the soil on the ground.” Wow, this Dharma is so hard to encounter! Therefore, the duration is long and the availability is rare like this. What is more important is that [the teachings] can truly resolve problems. Thus, it is extremely precious! What is the benefit of the

teachings?

[10A, 02.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 38 L8]

(2) the idea of an eye, since the wisdom that arises together with hearing the teachings becomes greater and greater;

The second one [the idea of an eye], this is such a rare thing. Dharma can help increase our “wisdom that arises together with hearing the teachings.” There are many different explanations for this arising wisdom. Here, I will use only one way to explain it. What is “wisdom that arises together with hearing the teachings?” It is the wisdom endowed at the time of birth. Why does it arise at the time of birth? It is related to the blissful and wisdom merits accumulated from my previous lifetimes, the collection of blissful and wisdom merits. What can this be compared to? It is comparable to the wisdom that arises from hearing and the wisdom that arises from applying the practice. I am endowed with these wisdom and blissful merits; [I] have encountered virtuous teachers and, upon hearing the teachings, followed with advancement in this life. Not only has this increased [my ability to] listen, but also enhanced proper application of the practice of the teachings that is how it works. This arising wisdom was carried over from previous lives. What does this accumulation rely on? It relies on hearing the Buddha Dharma in this lifetime. Therefore, through hearing the teachings, [our] wisdom can be increased and then [we are capable to] resolve issues ultimately and completely. Therefore, it is like an eye.

[10A, 03.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 39 L1]

(3) the idea of illumination, since the eye of wisdom that has arisen will see the real nature [emptiness] and the

diversity [of all phenomena];

Oh, with this statement of the author, what is this increase for? The aim should be constantly assured from the beginning to the end. It does not mean: well, I understood it and then I can turn around to tell others, so I will become famous and make a lot of money. No, no, no, definitely not! This is absurd! It is through understanding that following two can be achieved: the true nature [of emptiness] and the diversity [of all phenomena]. One is to know the nature of reality and the other is to know dependent arising thoroughly. The completion of both is Buddhahood. These two can resolve all problems. Thus, these [two] not only are our eyes, but they are also the external light. This is the third idea. What is the benefit?

[10A, 04.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 39 L8]

(4) the idea of great benefit, since, in the end, the teachings bestow the results of nirvana and great enlightenment; and

In the end, these things will lead you to nirvana and ultimate enlightenment. This is most laudable! This “great” benefit is absolutely peerless. All of your non-virtues will be eliminated and all good qualities will be achieved, such great benefits! Then, we say: although these great benefits are good, but later it will even better! There is no doubt to have this kind of ultimate achievement and [you] will also see the effect now.

[10A, 04.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 39 L13]

(5) the idea of being beyond reproach, since from this very moment you will attain the bliss of meditative serenity and insight, the causes of nirvana and great enlightenment.

The attainment of great enlightenment and nirvana requires the good quality of elimination of faults and the good quality of wisdom merits. These two ultimate results can be attained now. In fact, if these cannot be attained now, then the ultimate effect is not attainable. Why? For the present time is the cause. If you do not plant the seed, will the effect arise? So, now, often when we discuss a topic and people say: “Well, that is the state of the Bodhisattvas and Sages!” We commonly will react this way. “It seems as if you are asking too much of me!” This is an erroneous concept. I myself went through this experience as well. I remember that my virtuous teacher often would encourage and request this of me. I often thought: “alas! For what the Venerable Master asked [me to do], I am still an ordinary being; I am still an ordinary being!” Once, he told me, “It is precisely because you are an ordinary being that I am telling you this. If you were a sage, there would be no need for me to tell you anything! I would bow to you and learn from you. You could teach me!” I scratched my head and thought, that’s right! However, [I] still could not figure out this concept. After listening to the teacher’s comment, I came back and thought about it: “I am still an ordinary being. His demands are still too high!” Later, it gradually dawned on me that because you are an ordinary being, [you] need to learn. You feel suffering so you need to listen to the teachings for self-purification. Plant seeds so that in the future step-by-step advancement is available and you will eventually be released from the effects of suffering. This is very clear.

[10A, 06.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 40 L11]

So now, after we have heard the teachings, we still feel that: I am an ordinary being! Before you start practicing, the drum of retreat has already been sounded, “This...can’t be

done! There is no way to do it!” Once you beat the drum of retreat, nothing will be accomplished. Keep this in mind! Let’s use today as an example [that day was a national holiday] – you were told to sweep the floor. You replied, “Everyone is sitting here and telling me to sweep. The sun is so strong outside and today is a national holiday so everyone else has the day off. Sitting here is already unfair, but what’s more is that I am told to sweep.” You won’t even do the sweeping! Before you start, you are beating the drum of retreat. The result is obvious! You are unable to accomplish such a small task and now you say, “Ah, I want to learn from Buddha to liberate all living beings from cyclic existence.” However, with this type of mentality, may I ask, how can you be liberated? Often with this latent mindset, it is not possible to ask you to sweep the floor, but going out to give a teaching is possible. Why? To promulgate the teachings and benefit others! You can’t even clarify all those afflictions within, but you can promulgate the teachings and benefit others? How absurd! What a mistake!

[10A, 07.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 41 L4]

So what is really important is to thoroughly understand this concept of planting the right seeds that will lead to the proper effects in the future. With this understanding, many of our current obstacles will be eliminated. When you put in a little effort right now, you will think, “Well, it allows me to immediately accumulate this – blissful merits.” Don’t say, “He is not doing it and asking me to do it!” with pursed lips. What is increasing from within is not wisdom instead it is affliction. Then [you] engage in contentious behavior. This is very clear and obvious. So if you truly examine your internal mind state, it will be clear and evident. This is the brilliance of Buddha

Dharma.

[10A, 07.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 41 L9]

So here, two causes are mentioned – meditative serenity and insight. In order to attain enlightened nirvana, [one must have] the good quality of elimination of faults, and the other is the good quality of wisdom merits. The causes are these two. Of course, in order to attain meditative serenity and insight, the prerequisite is to obtain the correct view. To attain the correct view – ethical discipline, meditative concentration, and wisdom [the three precious trainings] – are all encompassed in meditative serenity and insight. Meditative serenity and insight intrinsically lack suffering – blissfulness! This is absolutely true. Now, it is a pity for us, with learning Buddha Dharma, the more we study, the more suffering there is. We are unable to tolerate a retreat in the mountains – it is unbearable, this will not work. Once [you] abide by the precepts, you were taught that this will not do, that will not do. It will not work! What are the attributes of ethical discipline? Taming – taming your afflictions. Once you have tamed afflictions, what happens? Refreshing coolness is attained – this refreshing feeling is blissful, so it is called liberation. This sila [Sanskrit] has three meanings – translated into Chinese, it is taming, refreshing coolness, and liberation. May I ask you, once you have attained refreshing coolness and liberation, will you have afflictions? Will you still be unhappy? These days, we uphold the precepts for half a day, and think: Wow! I received my precepts from so and so. Well, what a big ego! This is a sign of not being concordant [with the teachings] and it is not happiness. This is true reality.

[10A, 09.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 42 L3]

Since your afflictions are tamed, thus you can advance to learn meditative concentration and wisdom. The requirement to correspond to ethical discipline is such, needless to say about meditative concentration and wisdom. Indeed, for each step there is a profound meaning that enables us to attain the bliss of resonating to the teachings. Is there the same kind of bliss in the mundane world? Yes! But the worldly happiness still leads to the effect of cyclic existence. Therefore, only this kind of [Dharma] bliss is beyond reproach. There is a reason why the text does not refer to the benefits and only points out that it is beyond reproach. In the mundane world, when we make some money today, the happiness is immediate. Sorry to say, once your lifetime is over, it is unclear where you will end up. The [worldly happiness] is faulty and this concept must be clarified. So this is an inevitable situation, well! This is the sequence of the five [ideas].

[10A, 09.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 42 L9]
To contemplate this is to contemplate the benefits of hearing the teaching.

If you contemplate [the benefits of hearing] in this way, then, with these thoughts, do you understand where the benefit arises? It arises from hearing the teachings. Ah, hearing the teachings has such laudable benefits! So right now, many people say, I am about to meditate so there is no need to listen [to the teachings]. Alas, I used to think this way too and always thought that [I needed] to close the door to have a retreat. Now, when thinking back, [I] have so much regret. Without proper understanding, what is there to meditate? At first, seclusion in a mountain retreat may seem quite clear and calm. [But] after a few days, [you] can't stand it

anymore and don't know how to handle it! Those in better shape might sleep. Others in worse shape might go out and engage in awful deeds. Here lies the reason. After you attain the correct understanding, the entire situation will change. All of this relies on hearing. This is the first point [v.1 p.55 A. How to listen to a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great].

[10A, 10.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 43 L3]

Then, because we have talked about these benefits, you will not remain in status quo at that time. You will have a focused aspiration to find a virtuous teacher and hear the teachings. It does not start from hearing immediately; there is one additional qualification - the aforementioned elimination of our obstacles. That is, if you don't have this mentality, then the obstacles will remain. As for mundane knowledge, physics often says that there is inertia for everything. What is inertia? If a given object is at rest, it remains at rest. If you want to push it, you need to apply some force. This same theory applies to living beings. Usually, our minds have latent behaviors that are not easy to change. This is called inertia. Changing this state requires a force. In physics, you can push or pull, but what does our mental force rely on? It relies upon contemplation.

[10A, 11.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 43 L11]

Once you have contemplated, you will say: there are great benefits in doing so, there are great disadvantages if this is not done. And you will change. Actually, this concept is easy to understand. We are here feeling good, and don't feel like moving. If you discover that this place is unsafe and dangerous, that force will push you to move. Or, if there is some special advantage somewhere, you want to go there,

that force will pull you. This is the same idea here: upon contemplation, it will pull you to hear the teachings. Thus, you are inspired to listen to the teachings. At that time, the aforementioned obstacles are eliminated, yet you still need to prepare something for yourself.

English LR v.1 p.57

[10A, 12.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 44 L2]

2. Developing reverence for the teaching and the instructor

In fact, here it says that it must be a reverential relationship. Regardless of the teaching or the instructor, you must wholeheartedly respect them. Earlier, there was the story of the elderly monk: in the beginning, he came with great respect for the teachings. Later, he had a frame of mind that did not neglect anyone or any teachings. Regardless of what was taught, he listened with great respect. Regardless of who was teaching, he listened with great respect. Because of this, he received benefits. Here, I am not saying that every preacher is Buddha and that you must do it this way. But we need to know how to apply properly. If you can do so, the benefits are yours. This concept is very important! The reason why we can't achieve this is because of this "I." So here, I do not stress "selflessness." In this section, rather, I speak of the "self." Or, from your standpoint, what is best for you. This is the most beneficial method and absolutely true. We might as well take the Sutra – what Buddha taught us – and continue to study with great care.

[10A, 13.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 44 L11]

The *Sutra of Ksitigarbha (Ksitigarbha-sutra)* says:

Lama Tsong-kha-pa always cited from sutras,

commentaries, the words of ancient teachers, and even used practical examples to illustrate this. How should [we] go about this?

[10A, 13.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 44 L13]

Listen to the teachings with one-pointed faith and respect.

Do not censure or deride the speaker;

Honor your instructors—

Develop the idea that they are like a Buddha.

Regarding the Dharma and the instructor, what is to be done? “One-pointed” is focused, concentrated. Concentrate our entire energy on this and only on this, this goal should be set very clearly. So this is to say, our worldly academic study is for us to obtain a degree and make money. Buddhist study is the same, to seek what? It is to attain the effect of final nirvana. The entire mind is concentrated on arriving to this goal. This does not mean that I listened to the teaching and, a couple days later, I will teach too – and teach like a great Dharma Master – that’s not it! This pure one-pointed [practice] is required, followed by a pure faithful mind in addition to paying respect. So within the pure faith there is respectfulness; there is also focus with reverence. This reverence has an important, absolutely important function! From beginningless time, [we] are circling around this attitude of “me.” This “me” definitely arises with the ego, definitely comes with pride, definitely has a view, and definitely has ignorance. The view is your perception, and then the rest are latent habits. Thus, as long as this arrogance is there, no matter what other good qualities you possess – Buddha Dharma will not enter, it will certainly be unable to flow in! So, hearing requires focus, faith, and respect. Listen with this

attitude! Considering our current status, it is probably not easy to achieve this right away, do it to the best of your ability. The more you reflect on the laudable benefits of hearing the teachings, and then, step by step, gradually [you] will get there. There needs to be more contemplation, more reflection.

[10A, 15.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 45 L11]

On the other hand, “do not censure or deride the instructor.” Never ever censure or deride [the teacher]. This is very serious. Censure and derision are very serious. You heard earlier about how the invaluable jewel is rarely heard and hard to find, and now you want to censure and deride it. This priceless jewel can resolve all of your obstacles and enable the attainment of unmatched bliss. In the end, not only will you fail to attain it but there will also be the opposite effect. If you censure and deride, there are very grave consequences. We need to contemplate and analyze on this concept more often, apply more reflection and analysis.

[10A, 16.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 46 L1]

So some people may say, “Ah, this Dharma Master who is giving the teachings, he is not good!” If [he is] not good at it, then you don’t need to listen to him! It is just that simple, why do you need to censure and deride him? If he is not good, that is his own business! We would definitely not want to visit hell and deride the beings there, why do you bother to do so? He [the hell being] is already pitiful. You would never deride a cow, because it is already in an unfortunate state. If he is wrong, being wrong is his business. If you decide to deride him, you are not any better than him! He does so out of ignorance - if you have wisdom, you will improve yourself. If you don’t improve, by deriding him, wouldn’t that make you the

same as the cow? This is absolutely true. So if you deride him, this proves that you are equal to him or even worse, such a bad egg! So, here, I tried to explain it from the other angle. We especially need to understand that whether towards the Dharma or the instructor, we definitely can never engage in censure or derision!

[10A, 17.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 46 L9]

Later in this text, there is a story of one of the great teachers of the lineage. Once, a great master passed by a place where there happened to be a Dharma Assembly. So he told his attendant in the back, “Stop, stop! There is a Dharma Assembly, let’s go hear the teachings.” It turned out that there was a very ordinary instructor who was giving the teaching. Thus, the attendant felt wronged! [The attendant thought], “Why does my teacher, an acclaimed virtuous teacher, come to this place to listen to this instructor? That instructor’s teaching is not even as good as my own teachings. Why did we come to listen?” But his master, the virtuous teacher, was truly paying attention to the teachings and so the attendant could do nothing but suffer through it. After hearing the teachings, he was not very happy and said, “Master! This person’s teaching is quite ordinary and yet you still went... implying wouldn’t this demean your status?”

[10A, 18.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 47 L2]

How did this virtuous teacher respond? “Alas, how can you say this? I have received two great benefits here!” “What are these two benefits?” “It is the Dharma! He teaches here, and I give my utmost respect, which allows me to transform based on the teaching. The benefits are unmatched! Because of his teaching today, I gained these benefits. Then, I can

rejoice his Dharma Assembly. These are all unparalleled merits! Where have the teachings that I often taught you gone? This was such a great opportunity!” Ah, absolutely right! These are the deeds of a great virtuous teacher; such are his deeds. Now, if we go and seek [a teaching] with a little bit of understanding [you think]: “Ah, why is he talking about this, really!” Then, if he is better than you, [you think,] “He’s good! What’s so good about him? I don’t care about him. Be that way!” If he is better than you, [you] can’t take it; if he is worse than you, it’s not okay either. It is not about whether he is better or not. The issue lies in our minds. This is where we should truly purify ourselves. Next... “honor your instructors” - here, it specifically emphasizes that you must respect the teachings and the instructor. Besides that, offerings need to be made to this instructor.

[10A, 19.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 47 L12]

“Develop the idea that they are like a Buddha.” As for the instructor of the teaching, view him as the Buddha. There is great reasoning behind this concept, great meaning. With regards to this point, it is really hard for us to achieve, not easy for us to achieve. This point will not be elaborated too much. If you can truly view him as the Buddha, you will wholeheartedly strive to practice, to respect him. However much respect you pay – hey, how wondrous! You will receive a comparable amount of benefit. There was a great Venerable Master named Ying-guang (印光大師) who locked himself in a retreat and prostrated to Buddha. Of course, most of us Buddhists respected him greatly. At that time, some people would visit him out of admiration, but not all of them were Buddhists. There was one intellectual person who went with his friends – they were all well known at that time – to visit

Venerable Ying-guang, and some non-Buddhists came along. This intellectual scholar asked, “Venerable Master! Your Buddha statue is made of wood; it is carved out of clay and wood. Why do you worship it?” What was Venerable Ying-guang’s reply? ”It is made out of clay and wood, but I am not!” Do you understand what this means? Of course, that [statue] is made of clay and wood, but I’m not!

[10A, 20.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 48 L6]

The same principle applies here. His teachings may not be correct, but I am not like that! I came to learn from Buddha. Let me ask, do you want to learn from Buddha? What are you here for?” [If you have come] to learn from Buddha, if it is for the sake of learning from Buddha, then you need to think positively. So Confucius said, “In a company of three people, my teacher is amongst them. Learn from their good qualities and abide accordingly, reflect on their shortcomings and rectify them within myself.” In this company of three people, there must be one who is my teacher. Actually, in a group of three, my teacher “is” definitely there, not just “possibly” there. This description of three people may not be limited to just three! This refers to the three types of behaviors: virtuous, non-virtuous, and ethically neutral. With the virtuous, abide by it accordingly; if he is good, follow him as your instructor. When you see his non-virtuous act: “I don’t want to be non-virtuous; I will improve [myself]”.

[10A, 21.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 48 L13]

Buddha Dharma is even more excellent! The genuine transcendent characteristic of Buddha Dharma is this non-virtuous person who teaches you to refrain from his [bad] actions. So this is to say, a virtuous person is a teacher; a

non-virtuous person represents our merits [to refrain from non-virtue]. For the virtuous one, he teaches you, so you learn from him. But with the non-virtuous one, it is a great opportunity for you to apply the teachings from the virtuous teachers. This will increase your good qualities. So in a group of three people, aren't they all your teachers? If you cannot internalize this concept, learning Buddhism becomes difficult.

[10A, 21.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 49 L2]

Buddha clearly taught us that his achievement of Buddhahood relied on sentient beings! The Bodhi tree must be irrigated with the water of compassion. This compassionate water relies on innumerable living beings – this is how it works. Thus, when we repeatedly declare [that we want to] learn from Buddha, [we] keep saying [that we are] Mahayana [practitioners], and say again and again that we want to liberate living beings, where do you start? Right here [pay respect to the teacher and teaching]! I have mentioned earlier that in order to achieve the ultimate effect, you need to begin with the immediate two causes [respect the teaching and the teacher]. I just said that I didn't understand it before, and thought, "I am only an ordinary being!" Now, turn that around, "Alas! I am indeed an ordinary being; I should immediately strive hard!" How do I plant the seeds of the sages at the causal stage? Definitely refrain from increasing the causes for becoming an ordinary being – continue to advance and never stop growing. So, say, "This person is wrong and that person treated me this way!" These are all causes of an ordinary being, causes of endless rebirth and cyclic existence! Sever them immediately. This is what a true Buddhist should do. If you can sever this process, then at least you will not fall [into the miserable realms]. If you can sever it, you can teach

others your purification process and truly help others. This is genuine promulgation of the Dharma. At that time, you can open your mouth [to teach]. The concept is this simple! So this is exactly what we ordinary beings should do.

[10A, 23.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 49 L12]

With this understanding, concentration will arise, faith will be developed, veneration will naturally appear, and the instructor will be viewed as the Buddha. Not only will the instructor be viewed as Buddha, but you will also view those who are non-virtuous as Buddha. Why? Why would you view the non-virtuous as Buddha? This is really simple. Without non-virtuous people, you cannot achieve Buddhahood. Your achievement relies on those who are non-virtuous! So Buddha exhorted very clearly, “I achieved Buddhahood by relying on two people. The first one is my teacher. He is Buddha – teaching me the fundamental concepts.” Just by teaching you the concepts, would this work? No, you have to apply accordingly! The second one was Devadatta. Why did Buddha have to rely on Devadatta? Devadatta represented the worst, the most evil person in the world. There is no one worse than him. “Without Devadatta, I could not achieve my Buddhahood!” Since he helps you achieve Buddhahood, of course you should respect him like a Buddha. Very straightforward! This concept is easy to preach! So, needless to say, now that this person is Buddha, how could you not respect him? Even Devadatta can be respected like the Buddha. Now that this concept is revealed to you, but instead you pay him no respect, does this sound right?

[10A, 24.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 50 L6]

So what is most important for us – it is not about being

unable to achieve it! Often, we begin to practice by prostrating for half a day; it's no wonder Venerable Hang-shan said, "It is useless if you prostrate until your head bleeds." And, with regards to chanting Buddha's name, "It is useless if you shout Buddha's name until your throat hurts" – [that is], you don't have the proper recognition and method. With the proper approach, merits will arise with little effort, not to mention reciting Buddha's name or prostrating to Buddha. Of course these will accumulate a great store of merits! The merits of reciting Buddha's name and prostrating to Buddha are immeasurable! It all depends on whether you have the proper perception. Where does the proper perception arise? It must be from hearing [the teachings]! From where do you hear the teachings? From a virtuous teacher! That is how it works. How can you not view him as a Buddha! Upon this understanding, well, [let's] continue.

[10A, 24.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 50 L12]
Thus, as this says, view the instructor as being like a Buddha.

Below, it will explain how to act when you view [the instructor] as a Buddha.

[10A, 24.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 50 L14]
Eliminate disrespect; honor him or her with homage and goods by offering a lion throne and the like.

You should honor and respect him accordingly.

[10A, 25.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 51 L2]
Also, as the *Bodhisattva Levels* sets forth,

So the above tells us [what to do] and below we will see

the commentary on the *Bodhisattva Levels*. Bodhisattvas and great teachers clearly explained, what should be done during actual session of hearing?

[10A, 25.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 51 L5]
listen without the afflictions [of arrogance and contempt] and without bringing to mind the five conditions of an instructor.

The key for a clear mind is that it has to be pure, respectful, and focused, which should not be contaminated. These afflictions will be explained later. Also, [I] specifically point out that these perceptions should not be formed in our minds. Do not bring to mind the five conditions of the instructor. These are all ways of paying improper attention in our minds. Paying improper attention will deliver us to the miserable realms. Paying attention properly will lead us to liberation and benefiting others. Well then, what is the affliction? Below, it is divided into two parts.

[10A, 25.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 51 L10]
Being free from arrogance means to listen with the following six attributes: (1) listening at an appropriate time, (2) showing homage, (3) showing deference, (4) not being resentful, (5) practicing according to the instructor's words, and (6) not looking for the chance to argue.

Among the afflictions, the first is maintaining an arrogant attitude! The second is looking down on others. This arrogance must be removed, and the contempt for others needs to be removed. What [should they be replaced with]? Veneration and faith! Because you are far from arrogance, you

are humble and respectful. So constantly listen [to the teachings], listen with homage, and listen not only with respect but you should also pay attention with deference. This deference can be divided into two parts. The first is to pay attention physically and verbally. The second is to abide by the teachings. These are ways to show deference. Both are required. Next, do not be resentful and do not have discordance within your mind. This resentment can appear in various forms. It may arise from the self or from others. With regards to the self, for instance, you are not feeling well or perhaps something else is happening. With regards to others, maybe you were offended by some of the teachings that you heard or the like. This is the time when you need to be very careful. This is critically important, very important! With my present realization, I often say that the key reason that I am able to teach here is due to the blessings endowed from virtuous teachers from the very beginning.

English LR V1. P.57

[10B, 00.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 53 L1]

Most of you already know the characteristics of my virtuous teacher. Today, I will talk about them again. I relied on this virtuous teacher for a few years. He would rarely smile at you. Whatever you did and reported to him, he would always feel that it was not done correctly. He always ended up reproaching you, just like that. But, as a result, to this day, I appreciate him all the time. Due to this attitude of his, he more or less tamed some of my afflictions, quelled some of them. Therefore, it particularly says here, “(4) not being resentful, (5) practice according to the instructor’s words.” Upon hearing [the teachings], apply accordingly. It does not mean that you can achieve it right away. [We] should always abide by what

he is trying to point out to us, which is what the Buddha and Bodhisattvas have pointed out for us to apply. While practicing, we often say: "He taught me to do it this way, yet he himself is also filled with faults!" This is absolutely not allowed - "not looking for the chance to argue." Don't look for others' faults. Where should we be looking? [We should] look for our own faults. If you can look for your own faults then you are improving yourself, you will be improved. So listen with these six attributes in mind.

[10B, 01.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 53 L9]

I have heard this verse from the *Praise of Mindfulness*:

"My faults are as great as the mountain yet I can't see,
The faults of the teacher are as tiny as a dust particle yet I
clearly perceive them,
Because of this, the mind is not in concordance with the
Dharma.

May I diligently confess and remember this well."

I will write this [on the board]. Let me repeat it. Our faults pile up higher than a mountain. They accumulate as high as a mountain, but [we] do not see the accumulation, [we] are unable to identify it! We are ignorant from beginningless time. [We are] constantly in the midst of afflictions which accumulates higher than a mountain! It is as vast as the space of the Dharma-realm, yet [we are] unable to see it! As for the teacher, you clearly examine the teacher's tiny speck of fault. The mind does not align with the Dharma because of this! We studied Buddha Dharma but are unable to align with it. Here is the cause! "May I diligently confess and remember this well." Constantly keep this in mind. As long as you are mindful of this, you will receive benefits. Absolutely! You should constantly keep it in your mind. This is the most important, and

with just this one sentence you will gain benefits. This is absolutely true! How many times can you reflect on your own faults? Once you see it, then you would feel: “Alas, that I am a practitioner of Buddha Dharma, wearing this [monastic] robe, but I am still quite terrible!” Then there’s hope for you, there’s hope for you! Moreover, if you replace the word “teacher” with “people,” that would be even better. Take heed! This is just a small point, but Buddha Dharma is just this subtle. Therefore it is known as internal mind training, also known as spiritual training! External learning is to look outward. Introspective learning is the opposite, to reflect on the self.

[10B, 03.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 54 L12]

I remember in our Chinese history there is a very amusing story, a very famous story. Rather than saying that it is amusing, it would probably be better to say that it is a very touching story. Nan-shan Venerable Dao-xuan Master, the forefather of the precepts, was truly admirable. He had contributed much to China and to all of Buddhism. He first learned from his teacher. His teacher taught him ethical discipline. Upon hearing it once, [he] felt: “Well, I got it.” This ethical discipline, he listened to it once. He was very brilliant and thought that was it. Afterwards the teachings his teacher gave did not seem to change so he decided to go outside the monastery to study. His teacher [said], “Well, if you have to go outside, you can.” So he left. After going around in a big circle, he realized that there was only so much that could be learned outside, but none of the teachings were more brilliant than that of his teacher’s. So he returned. Upon his return, his teacher chased him out and did not want him back. He desperately tried very hard to repent. However, in spite of his confession, his teacher still did not want him. So he knelt down, arduously

confessed and promised that he would work very hard. Finally, he was able to return.

[10B, 04.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 55 L5]

Upon his return, the teacher had nothing else but continued giving the same teachings; [he] still talked about the same topics as before. He had listened [to these teachings] for so many years already, had already understood them, and thought that there was no more flavor left, so he left. But now, the teacher still taught the same topic. This time, he listened wholeheartedly on the *Dharmagupta-vinaya* [precepts] twenty times. You should all read the biography of Venerable Dao-xuan. To be a master of the time is not that easy! As for us now – “Well, I understand it!” But in reality [we are] still far away from it. I just mentioned this story in passing here. If you grasped the intended meaning, and reflect on yourself, wow! Speaking for myself now, I would realize that I am laden with countless contaminations. Even if I apply all of my energy, day and night, for twenty-four sleepless hours, [I] would not be able to purify [myself]. So long as you reflect on yourself, you will see it right away. I believe that we all innately have this [introspective] skill. Everyone has this ability! What is pitiful, well, it is this [not knowing how to be introspective]!

[10B, 04.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 55 L12]

Here, he tells us to never look for others' faults. Not only should we not look for the teacher's faults, but also anyone else's. Now we say that not applying the teachings to practice is not good! This is because [our] latent propensity is already very, very weighty. Yet our tendency to align with the teaching is not there. Day in and day out [we are] constantly in a state of mental distraction, just like that. For any tiny disturbance,

your eyes will...oh, follow it! Then, whatever [we] see is nothing but others' faults. The problem is right here. Due to this flaw [of fault finding], we see things in an erroneous way. And then we argue and create [nonvirtuous] deeds; it all arises from here. So there is only one solution – to turn around and look within ourselves. Once you see clearly, needless to say, you would dare not see the faults of your teacher, not to mention looking for anyone else's faults! How would you have time to look for that? When you see your own faults and are hell-bound, wow, that boiling pot of oil, that mountain of blades is waiting there for you. How can you have time to take a wrong step! That pot of oil is waiting there for you. Therefore, "the mind is not in concordance with the Dharma due to this. May I diligently confess and remember this well!"

[10B, 06.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 56 L7]

Being free from contempt means to respect the teaching and the one who gives it and not to belittle these two.

So then, arrogance and contempt should be avoided. What should we do instead of having contempt? Do not even engage in the slightest belittling of the teaching and the instructor. We must respect them.

[10B, 06.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 56 L9]

Not bringing to mind the five conditions means to cast away the thought, "I will not listen to this person because he or she

We should do away with these five conditions, especially the ones that are very easy for us to commit. Which are the five?

[10B, 06.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 56 L11]
(1) has fallen from ethical discipline,

Here, it is not necessarily referring to ethical discipline. In other words, it may also mean that his practice was flawed. “Fallen” has a special meaning. In short, it seems as if he is unable to achieve it. We must understand this point. Although there is the possibility of being unable to abide [by the precepts], but in reality, he may have achieved it but you might not be able to see it. This can absolutely be possible! For myself – not to mention how great the experienced practitioners are – we don’t even recognize it. Take what is in front of us now – many will say: “Right now, I cannot find anyone qualified in all of Taiwan!” However, I did see many virtuous teachers. The benefit I have received is from those [teachers] in Taiwan. This is absolutely true! Even as we speak, virtuous teachers are right in front of our very eyes! So long as you study well, I guarantee that you will meet them in the future. So you don’t need to fault find in others. Once you truly transform, you will recognize the attributes of a virtuous teacher. This is an absolute fact! This concept is very crucial. Later we will gradually, gradually find an opportunity to further explain this. And then?

[10B, 07.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 57 L7]
(2) is of poor lineage,

I was born into a great lineage, and this person seems ... to have very low status.

English LR v.1 p.58

[10B, 07.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 57 L9]
(3) has an unattractive physical appearance, (4) is inarticulate,

[He was born] with “an unattractive physical appearance.” When he speaks, he is inarticulate and he uses awful words. Others have elegant diction with refined sources, etc. When he speaks, it seems very rough and harsh.

[10B, 07.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 57 L12]
(5) or speaks harshly and unpleasantly.”

When someone comes and says, “Wow, so and so, you are great, you are very good!” And he [this teacher you are picking on] comes and says, “You are wrong here and there!” Cases like that. Because you heard it...

[10B, 08.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 58 L2]

Alas! It is senseless staying here and you leave because you can't take it anymore, and that is done! The moment [we] leave, we also miss the opportunity [to learn]!

[10B, 08.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 58 L5]

Also, it is as is said in the *Garland of Birth Stories*:

Here the concept is unjustified, what should be done? What is the proper way? Buddha told us:

[10B, 08.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 58 L6]

Stay on a low seat.

Show the glory of discipline.

You should make your attitude as diminished as possible. This does not necessarily mean you have to sit at the lowest seat, it means that you should mentally diminish the attitude.

In other words, you must do away with your pride: well, I am the most inferior; I must strive hard at learning! Then you can “develop the glory of discipline.” The three steps of Buddha’s teachings are ethical discipline, meditative concentration, and wisdom. Ethical discipline is to tame. Tame what? Tame afflictions. Essentially, your ego is so big, well, if you can abide by the teaching here, if you can align with the teachings, your affliction is immediately under control. At that time, your opportunity to advance will arise; the nectar of the teachings will then enter. So there is a saying: “pride is like a high mountain, the nectar of teaching will not enter.” Like the high mountain, even flowing with nectar, it would dry out and be of no use! Now, you reverse it and let [the nectar of the teaching] enter, ah, then it is right. And the good quality of taming becomes available. By then,

[10B, 09.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 59 L1]

Look with an eye of delight.

Show respect and one-pointed obeisance,

As if drinking a nectar of words.

Wow, you are delighted! As though [you are] drinking nectar. The nectar can cure all of our illnesses, and now it can cure our illness of cyclic existence. On the other hand, if you do not have actual nectar, by applying the same mentality, you can still be nurtured by the teaching and experience the beauty of Dharma.

[10B, 09.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 59 L5]

Show reverence and listen to the teaching

With clear delight and a mind undefiled,

Like a patient listening to the words of a doctor.

Show respect, one-pointed obeisance and reverence to

purify and tame our minds to completely eliminate the impurities within. At this time, what will happen? You will not engage in contention. Like a sick patient, mindfully abide by the doctor's instruction. We now have the great illness of ignorance. When we listen to the Buddha, the teachings and instructors give us Dharma medicine. We mindfully serve him and listen [to his teaching], and then this attitude is correct. The previous part is telling us to prepare. Is this enough? Well, not yet. Prior to the actual session, [we] have covered [in the preparatory section for listening to the teaching]. As for the actual listening session, to be honest, it is still a prerequisite for hearing the teachings. Below, it says:

[10B, 10.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 59 L13]

3. How you actually listen

How to listen has two parts:

- 1. Abandoning the three faults of a vessel**
- 2. Relying on the six ideas**

[10B, 11.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 60 L6]

“How you actually listen” in fact has more to be discussed later. We will go through this step-by-step, and then it will become very clear. So now, sure, the earlier obstacles are removed, with what method? [The method is] through contemplating the great benefits of hearing the teachings and removing our own lack of motivation to listen and unwillingness to hear. And, while hearing, there may be various conditions that not only prevent us from receiving benefits but also on the contrary, the purification is lost, just like that. [After purification,] then we can actually listen. This is further divided into two [parts]: one is the obstacle and the other is the opposite - the positive side. The negative side is our flaws, which is “abandoning the three faults of a vessel.”

The positive side is to possess these conditions of “relying on the six ideas.”

[10B, 11.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 60 L8]

a. Abandoning the three faults of a vessel

The author tells us, what are the three faults? He first explains

A vessel might have the following three faults: (1) being upside down

This is the first one.

**[10B, 11.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 60 L10]
or (2) though held right side up, being dirty; or (3) though clean, having a leaky bottom.**

These are the second and third ones.

[10B, 11.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 60 L12]

It discusses an upside-down vessel, like a cup, being upside down and of no use. The nectar of the teaching cannot enter. Even if it is right side up, but the cup is dirty or has poison inside, then it is also of no use. And then you may wash it clean, but the cup has a hole at the bottom so that it leaks, then it is also useless. This is easy to understand. So now, learning Buddha Dharma is the same. Hence, he used the cup as example.

[10B, 12.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 61 L5]

If it has these faults, then even though a rainfall from clouds assembled by the deities falls on it, the rain will (1) not go inside;

This is the first scenario, if it is upside down and [you] try

to use it to catch the nectar, no, it will not remain. You can turn it over, so that it is facing up, but it is dirty inside.

[10B, 12.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 61 L8]
or, (2) go inside, but be unable to fulfill its function - to be drunk, etc.- because it is contaminated by filth; or,

You still cannot use it for a good purpose.

[10B, 12.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 61 L10]
(3) not be polluted by filth, yet not remain inside and drain away.

Even though it is not dirty, but [the liquid] does not stay inside for it leaks, which is not good either. What is this exemplifying? It shows us that when we listen to the teaching, [we] have similar attitudes.

[10B, 12.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 62 L1]
Similarly, even though you are staying in a place where the teachings are being explained, there is no great purpose in your hearing the teachings if you (1) do not pay attention; or,

When listening to the teaching, the first [attitude to be aware of] is if the ears are not attentive when one is listening to the teachings. Usually we have two conditions: our mind may be wandering or, worse, some even have this situation: in a classroom at school when the teacher is lecturing, [students] read novels [hiding] in the [desk] drawer. [They are] either reading a novel or have scattered minds with wandering thoughts. Afterwards [you] fall asleep. That is of no use, totally hopeless! We often chatter nonsense with great enthusiasm. To tell you to go to sleep or tell you to stop chatting [you] can't

stop it. But when you listen to the teaching, one becomes drowsy; it is totally useless! In fact, these are our obscurations. When encountering such situations, sincerely confess and earnestly repent. This is the first scenario. What is the second?

[10B, 13.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 62 L8]
(2) though paying attention, misunderstand what is heard or listen with a bad motivation such as attachment; or,

He [the practitioner] heard it with his ears, but his mind is preoccupied with misunderstanding or has a “bad motivation”. This “misunderstanding” is an error. The “attachment” may be of two types or [the two can be] combined into one. He cannot be in accordance with those teachings. Upon hearing them, he is unable to accept it, because he has a preconception. Maybe he will say, “Hum! I come to learn Zen meditation, here he is teaching me to chant Buddha’s name. No, no, there is no use for this. Why are you teaching me this right now?” [The student has] this attitude and preconception in his mind. And then, the latent motivation is: when he hears the teaching, he has this particular mistaken preconceived notion, causing a lack of concordance with the teaching. For example, like what I just said, from my past experience, my personal mistake – when my Venerable Master said: “So and so, you should do...” What arose in my mind was, “Venerable Master, you tell me to do this, but I am only an ordinary being!” After several rounds of such conversations, sometimes [I] couldn’t take it anymore, so I even told him, “Venerable Master, I am only an ordinary being!” This is “with a bad motivation such as attachment.” While we grasp onto this, [we are] locked on it and unwilling to abandon these erroneous views. An attitude

like this is of no use at all.

[10B, 14.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 63 L5]
(3) though lacking these faults, do not solidify the words and meanings taken in at the time of hearing

With the above, you remove [the flaws] one step at a time, so it should be good enough, right! After listening and being unable to remember, or not bothering to remember, then it will still not help, it is still of no use! So, in reality, one must devote one's total attention. And while listening, do not apply "my" way of thinking. Once you apply your routine way of thinking, then it is not concordant. What should be properly applied? [We should] be in accordance with the mentality of the spirit of enlightenment [Bodhichitta]. You recognize the true value of learning to attain sublime enlightenment, and yearn to learn the entirety of the teachings. Now that he is teaching, listen wholeheartedly to understand what he is saying first, and then apply accordingly. This is how we become aligned with the teaching. Upon hearing, steadfastly maintain the teaching in your mind. We need to have this necessary condition.

[10B, 15.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 63 L12]

So Nagarjuna said in his commentary the *Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*^{*}, from the very beginning, he told us in the previous verse that a true Buddha Dharma practitioner should have this mentality: "With one-pointed focus you listen to the teaching as if you are in thirst and wholeheartedly immerse yourself in the meaning of the words." This means to devote all of your attention and does not mean to stare at him with your eyes wide open. When you focus all of your attention, unknowingly, you are devoting all

your energy with “one-pointed focus.” This “one-pointed focus” is where your aspiration is. In other words, the key is that your aspiration has to be present. Your eyes could be closed, but all of your aspiration is focused. There are times when some of us have the habit of listening intently with all of our attention and stare with our eyes wide open. I remember in the earlier years, when I followed my teacher, Venerable Ren. While listening to the teaching with all of my attention, I looked at him with my eyes wide open. Venerable Ren often said to me, “Don’t look at me!” But, after a while, I stared with my eyes wide open again. Truly! Gradually, I got accustomed to him and realized why he said, “I can’t teach Dharma at night.” Later, I discovered that not only could he not teach at night, but I also couldn’t listen to it either. If I listened to it at night, I couldn’t sleep as well. Fully focus with all of your attention and you will naturally feel delighted, and you become energized. Then you lie in bed and unable to fall asleep.

*[*The verse from the **Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom**:*

*Focused in listening like a thirsty person,
Mindfully into the meaning of the teaching,
Aspired to listen with sorrowful bliss,
This type of practitioner should be taught.]*

[10B, 16.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 64 L9]

Now I have noticed that many have listened and fallen asleep. It is truly a sign of not aligning with the teaching! If you just want to plant some virtuous roots, then this attitude is fine, but for those of you who are sincerely inspired to listen, this will not do. You need to be focused when listening to the teachings! What would that moment be like? [It is] as though you were in desperate need to quench your thirst. Ah, you see

that water over there, but you ignore it. Can you [ignore it]? Of course not! Then “with all of your heart you immerse yourself in the meaning of the words.” You will listen to him [the teacher] with full attention, follow his instruction with proper understanding, and then have accordance in your mind. If you can have enthusiasm, then listen to the teachings with great delight! “One’s heart will fill with sorrowful bliss! That is a sign of abiding by the teaching.

[10B, 17.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 65 L1]

Before Venerable Master Hong-yi departed, he wrote a short verse named, *A medley of sorrow and joy*. It is so true. When you are in resonance with the teaching, you will have that kind of feeling. You can’t really tell whether it is sorrow or joy! It is actually both – sorrow for encountering the teaching so late, and joy from this day onward. Actually, it is a mixed feeling, but it really is a sign of concordance. So in other words, with regard to this situation, when we listen to the teaching, this is the proper mentality. This is really important! Now the author will tell us what to do when we encounter the previously described situation.

[10B, 18.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 65 L6]

**but let them fade due to forgetting them and so forth.
Therefore, free yourself from all of these faults.**

In this circumstance [of forgetfulness], when we hear the teachings, there will be no great benefit. It is interesting why this word “great” is used, because there is still a little benefit! This is the wonder of Buddha Dharma! Even if you dislike it, even if you discriminate and say, “Sure, that teacher talks a lot, [but] after all this talk, what about [his behavior]?” Even with this attitude, yes, with this mental attitude, the descent to

hell will occur. Once you emerge from hell, [you must] still rely on the same force to advance. Buddha Dharma is beautiful; the benefits are definitely there! It definitely has benefits! However, it is not possible to receive great benefits. Of course, all of us would like to gain great benefits. No one would like to listen to the teachings, descend to hell first and then bounce to the deity realm. There is no such aspiration. In order to gain great benefits, we have to eliminate these faults. The method of eliminating the faults is called the remedy.

[10B, 19.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L1]
The remedies for these three faults

So what are these?

[10B, 19.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L3]
are indicated in the sutras in three phrases:

What did the sutras say?

[10B, 19.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L5]
“Listen well, thoroughly, and hold it in mind!”

When listening, listen well and thoroughly, and then? Afterwards, contemplate accordingly.

[10B, 19.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L7]
Moreover, as the *Bodhisattva Levels* sets forth, listen while wanting to understand everything,

You aspire to obtain this wholeheartedly – to become all knowing and omniscient, which is Buddha’s wisdom. How shall this be done?

[10B, 19.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L7]
staying one-pointed, attentive,

[10B, 19.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L10]

Focus entirely here. Train [your] ears to listen well.

[10B, 19.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 66 L12]
with your mind focused,

With this mentality, your intention should be virtuous and respectful. Maintain this steadfastly.

[10B, 19.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 67 L2]
and reflecting with complete composure.

Listen attentively. This is what the commentary taught us. Next, what does the sutra tell us? When we read sutras, especially the Mahayana scriptures, the sutras always make statements such as: when someone comes to hear the teachings and is inspired to ask a question, Buddha will reply, "Very well! Very well!" Wonderful, great, you have asked this question!" And then he will always tell us this, "Listen well! Listen well! And be mindful." It may not be exactly in these words. But many sutras have recorded this, "Listen well and be mindful." Usually when we read the sutras, these two phrases may not be considered relatively important; we just take them to be a formality. Here, it points out to us how important these two phrases are!

[10B, 20.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 67 L9]

So the truly laudable benefit of this commentary is divided into four main topics [v.1 p.34]. And this is the third primary one. Without the preparation mentioned earlier, introducing the actual teaching to you is of no use. With proper preparation, [the benefit] will arise. This is based on what? It is

stated clearly in the sutras. So now we claim to understand the sutras without guided explanation from experienced practitioners, thinking only studying the sutra on my own will do! These [people] are all geniuses. For a genius, of course, [self-study is sufficient], but for most ordinary human beings it is definitely not possible. In the sutra, “listen well and be mindful” has a very profound meaning. It is not easy for us to understand, but once you do, then you can achieve it. By then, you will be able to advance step by step - advance gradually. This is abandoning the three faults of a vessel. These faults need to be eliminated. Once the faults are eliminated, then, from the positive side there are these conditions; the need “to rely on the six ideas.”

[10B, 21.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 68 L2]

b. Relying on the six ideas

This is the minimum. It is not just eliminating the three faults. There is more to it. Here in the beginning, the minimum is to eliminate [the three faults]. In the same way, one must possess the six ideas. These six are, the first:

[10B, 21.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 68 L5]

3. Think of yourself as a sick person.

When [we] listen to the teachings, first think that I am sick now.

[10B, 21.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 68 L7]

Santideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Bodhisattva-caryavatara) says:

The full name of this commentary is *Engaging in Bodhisattva Deeds*. In the Tripitaka it is not called this name, it is recorded as the *Bodhisattva Compendium*, whether it

should be [recorded] this way, I don't remember exactly. The author is Santideva, but in the *Tripitaka* it was documented that Nagarjuna wrote it. Santideva is the disciple of Nagarjuna. I am not certain who actually wrote it. It could very possibly be Santideva. He modified some of the content taught by his teacher. Or it could be a mistake of the translator; it is not certain. What did Santideva say:

[10B, 22.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 68 L13]
English LR v.1 p.59

**Since you must follow a doctor's advice,
Even when stricken by ordinary illness,
What need is there to mention those who are
constantly stricken
With the illness of so many faults, attachment and the
like?**

If you are stricken by an ordinary illness, what would you do then? Find a doctor and abide by the doctor's prescription. It is needless to say that, since beginningless time, the three mental poisons have long struck us: attachment and hundreds of various illnesses. This approximate one hundred is not exactly one hundred [refers the illness of so many faults], this "hundred" is approximate, and we use this expression to describe all of them. Because we are in the long, dark nights of ignorance, nothing about us is right, nothing is right, everything is wrong! We are pressured by this serious illness, surprisingly unaware. Now, with a little sickness, alas, I caught a cold and my head hurts. I need to see the doctor. I need to lay down for a bit. And yet we do nothing about such a great [mental] illness, how pitiful! So the first thing to do is to realize

this. With this realization you are then willing to find a doctor. That is the time you will listen to advice. So then he explains:

[10B, 23.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 69 L8]
As Santideva says, you have been sick for a long time with the illness of the afflictions such as attachment – an illness that is long-lasting, intractable, and causes strong suffering. Therefore, you must recognize this to be your situation.

It says that we are in the long, dark nights of ignorance. It is very difficult to cure this illness! Indeed it is very, very difficult! Yet this illness produces fierce suffering. Everything in front of us now, there are no exceptions, everything is included. What does this mean? “Attachment and the like” are the three mental poisons. To describe the essential points and speak of the whole: We often speak from the view of the Tiantai school – opinionate, confusion, and subtle afflictions – all in all, without exception, are all included [in ignorance]. What about the length of time? From beginningless time, [we have] never ever stopped for a single minute or second. This suffering is unbearable: both physical and mental suffering. This is what [we] should be aware of – to realize that this is the illness.

[10B, 24.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 70 L1]
Ga-ma-pa (Ka-ma-ba) said

A teacher of the lineage told us,

[10B, 24.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 70 L3]
that if we were not in fact sick, then meditating on our sick condition would be misguided.

That means if you abide by the teaching and erroneously apply it, then it is wrong. It is upside down! But at the very least, you know the need to practice! What about us now, what is our present status?

[10B, 24.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 70 L6]
However, stricken with the virulent and chronic disease of the three mental poisons [attachment, hostility, and ignorance], we are extremely sick, but we are completely unaware that we are ill.

What is our current status? We are stricken with the disease of the three mental poisons. Wow, this disease is very serious, very severe! When we clearly examine our minds, it becomes very obvious. When a nice object appears, the feeling of happiness arises from within. What is this? This is answering to attachment! This is very clear. Well, you like this; this is good! In the midst of attachment, it needs to be removed. When an unfavorable object appears, then you feel out of place. This is being in concordance with hostility! What state are you in the rest of the time? [We are] in concordance with ignorance! Let me ask you all to carefully examine yourselves. Check closely. Are there any moments that you are away from these [the three mental poisons]? It is sad and pitiful that [we] don't even realize it. [We] don't know that our illness is so severe! Waking up in this way and while asleep it is the same way; in the deity realm it is the same as it is in the hell realm; while we are young, [we are] like this and after [we get] older it is still the same. Alas, "the sickness is severe" but we do not realize that this is an illness. This is the first idea to know. Think about it, is it true? Without this understanding, then listening to the teaching is useless to you. With this

understanding, then be mindfully aware of this severe illness of yours, and then the driving force will propel you to advance.

[10B, 26.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 71 L3]

We often say: well, I feel like practicing Buddha Dharma now! This is true for everyone here, not only for the renunciates, but also for the lay practitioners. Both are very hard to come by from rare virtuous roots. [We] must practice to be liberated from cyclic existence! However, when the time comes to practice, the feeling is, alas, we are unable to gather up [the energy] and lack of enthusiasm. Why? There is no driving force to propel you. You are unaware of your own illness. If you know that you are sick, then the driving force is inevitable. For example, just like how we are sitting here now, you were told to move around, but it is not easy to move. However, if an earthquake suddenly hits, then hey, even if you were sick and unable to crawl, [you would] get up and quickly run outside! I believe we all have this experience! It is simple, wow! An earthquake hits now and you run right away! Regardless of whether there is a headache or foot pain, these are all gone, because the driving force moves you forward. Now [Santideva] tells us, if you know that you have this sickness, you will seek [the teaching] wholeheartedly. So he teaches us to rely on the six ideas. This is not empty talk. There is definitely a great reason for this. And the laudability of this commentary is also here.

[11A, 00.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 75 L1]
English LR v.1 p.59

If the aforementioned pre-occupied flaws are there, it is of no help to you. Even if the faults were eliminated, the propelling force is absent. Now it tells you to proceed one step

at a time. With this illness of yours, what should you do next? Well, [you] need to find a doctor! Now, who is the doctor? The Dharma Master. Therefore, next,

[11A, 00.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 75 L4]

2. Think of the instructor as a doctor.

The Dharma Master who gives teachings is the doctor.

[11A, 00.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 75 L6]

For example, when you are stricken by a severe illness such as a wind or bile disorder, you seek a skilled doctor. Upon consulting your doctor, you are greatly delighted and listen to whatever your doctor says, revering him or her respectfully.

If we were sick, we would look for a doctor. Upon finding an effective doctor, you feel so joyful, ah, how nice! We would certainly follow his instructions and abide by them with great respect. Needless to say, everyone would do this. Even for a small problem, if you were cured after the first visit, you would definitely look for him regardless of how far away he was. If the issue were more serious, then the distance would not be a concern. Thus, that is why the first step is to make us aware of the illness. Once you are aware of being ill, you would even brave death to search. Searching for whom? Searching for a virtuous teacher. So next, the text says:

[11A, 01.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 76 L4]

Likewise, seek in this way a teacher who imparts the teachings.

Our true virtuous teacher is like this, just as though you were sick [and seeking a doctor]. So you have fulfilled the first condition, and the second will follow.

[11A, 01.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 76 L7]
Once you have found your teacher, venerate your teacher with respect and do what he or she says.

Once you have found [a virtuous teacher], never consider it as a burden!

[11A, 01.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 76 L9]
While doing this consider it a privilege, not a burden.

These two phrases are very important! Now we found a virtuous teacher, a teacher with good qualities. A genuine virtuous teacher usually wouldn't say, "Well, you are endowed with rare qualities. You have virtuous roots! You are such and such!" And if you have some education, again he praises you, "Wow, you are a college graduate!" Or even, "[you have] studied abroad!" You may sit there and feel light-headed. "Great, super, you are here now!" You would be adulated like a phoenix [on a pedestal]. Oh no! It's useless. On the contrary, if he skillfully torments you, well, maybe [your] improvement is possible. If he really has the capacity to torment you, this would truly be your fortune. At that time, you should absolutely refrain from thinking of it as a burden. It is truly a privilege. By the same token, when you find a good doctor, he has the skills to operate or fix something. He would get the job done without any hesitation. Of course, nowadays, doctors seem to apply various methods to coax you with syrups. It was not like this in the old days – a truly skillful doctor would pinpoint [the cause of illness]. For example, "good medicines are bitter to the taste"

and “good advice is unpleasant to the ears” yet will “benefit the deeds.”

Applying the teaching is the same way. We are stricken with such a serious illness, so [the remedy] has to be precise. Thus, you should never consider it as a burden – it should be viewed as a privilege.

[11A, 02.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 77 L8]

So here, I have indeed requested a few books. For example, *A Casual Talk of a Dream** was [an autobiography] written in the early Qing and late Ming dynasties by the elder Master Jian-yue. The biographies of great masters in history – especially *the Biography of Venerable Milarepa* – have particular significance. You should read them carefully. We are not trying to be limited the type of lineage or sect. We are just learning why they attained such achievements. And then, you might as well expand to a wider scope to read about Sadapraudita (常啼菩薩) in *the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* and youthful Sudhana (善財童子) in *the Array of Stalks Sutra* about how they relied on their virtuous teachers. Let us not talk about how to serve a virtuous teacher now. It is impossible [for you] to do him a little service. Rather, he gives you everything and you still feel displeased! That is our lack of concordance toward the teachings! Not resonating to the teaching!

[*一夢漫言 萬佛城翻譯 translation of *A Casual Talk of a Dream* <http://www.cttbchinese.org/fayubinfen/?p=3901>]

[11A, 03.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 77 L14]

Let us not talk about others. As for myself, I have already realized that I am not much of an achiever. However, when I invited my teacher to our abode [in Los Angeles] last spring, there were so many people helping [me]. I knew that they wouldn't know how to attend to my teacher, so I did it myself. The tea [my teacher] drank was very special, that is, if by chance [I] prepared it, I must ensure that the taste is right. Otherwise, it must be prepared all over again, and I have to do it personally. Because I have not acquired the true characteristics [of a qualified disciple], the attendant task was inferior, certainly incomparable to the great teachers in the lineage. But I feel that I am slightly better than you folks; thus, I am sitting here to teach you. I sincerely wish that each one of you becomes better than me – [that will be when] I congratulate you. Here, please pay attention. Once you find [a virtuous teacher], definitely do not think that it is a burden, but a privilege. What is it? This is honestly a true privilege. At that time, this teacher of mine told me, "When I give you some advice now, if you are not able to accept it, you will regret it in the future!" Several of my teachers said that they regret the fact that now; no one gives them a hard time! It was not until now that I sensed this is absolute true, totally correct. What should be done, then?

[11A, 04.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 78 L8]

"Venerate your teacher with respect and do what he or she says." You follow what he says. We are now doing things my way. Often, after the teaching is over – the teacher has taught, yet I just won't listen to him and he can't do anything about it. Alas! Even this is considered good – at least you are not talking back, so it is considered fair. This is not in concordance. So [we] must abide by the teaching and

wholeheartedly venerate and serve him. This is in concordance [with the teachings]. Thus,

[11A, 04.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 78 L12]
For, as the *Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* says:

Therefore, wise bodhisattvas, who have a strong thought to seek sublime enlightenment, vanquish pride decisively. Just as the sick rely on doctors in order to cure their illnesses, so you should rely on a teacher, applying yourself enthusiastically.

Next, it tells us, for a person truly seeking peerless enlightenment, what should they do? Have “strong thoughts.” To learn the Buddha Dharma, there are two necessary criteria: the first one is correct view, and the second is joyous perseverance. Without these two, don’t even talk about [wanting to practice Buddha Dharma]. It is hard to obtain the correct view, but once you have it, all of the previous principles are easy to resolve. For example, like we mentioned earlier, for the things that we often feel impossible, the logic becomes clear with the correct view. Sure! How can it be impossible? It can certainly be achieved. Just like what we said a while ago, you always look for others’ faults. By chance, you understand the correct view; so how can [you] look for others’ faults? The eyes should be focused on the self and you would fear having any small flaw. This logic is simple! In this degenerate saha world (娑婆惡世), any carelessness will lead to big trouble. Just as if there were many burglars around, you would sit there with your eyes wide open watching out for burglars taking away your belongings, worried about getting robbed. How can you look away in another direction? This is

very obvious! Once you look away, then you miss out! So, ah, [you] heard it and understood it properly. However, can you claim that you have the correct view? Not yet, it is just secondhand experience from others. When you have wisdom that arises from reflection that is when you have acquired the correct view. This concept will be explained later.

[11A, 06.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 79 L11]

Next, [you] must apply the practice with joyous perseverance. With the above understanding – you are in concordance with the teaching, but lack joyous dedication. It is still futile and you are not making any headway. Besides, now we are outside the entrance [of the Dharma door], not knowing where we stand, even without a goal. At that time, when [we] sincerely seek the teaching, [we] must be courageous and fearless! We don't need to say how certain great teachers were this way or that way; even coming to this place, I am very touched. I have long admired our elder abbot. After arriving, [I am] sure [I] made the right choice [to come here]. That day, I went to the hospital to visit him in his room, and he was unconscious but still chanting something with an open mouth. [I tried to] listen. What was it? He seemed to be alternately chanting *Praising Buddha verses*, reciting Amitabha Buddha, and then something else. This showed that he was mindful of them. After he returned [from the hospital], we told him, "Well, elder monk, now you are our spiritual pillar here, please do rest well!" Ah, when he heard the bell ring in the morning, he could no longer sleep; he had to go to the prayer hall for the morning session. Whereas for us, "Well, the morning session really is... if only we could go back to sleep after the bell rings, oh, it is too early!" So the true cause [of not able to joyously persevere] lies here. The mind is really ... you

are told to do something, you feel like you have been mistreated, like this. [You] always feel, “Well, this is not nutritious enough.” Then, you were told to enter the morning session a little earlier. When [you] arrive, [you] begin complaining about the poor air quality. It is not certain what is in [your] mind! This mentality is where the problem is!

[11A, 07.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 80 L7]

A person with correct view and true perseverance is considered as a “wise one”, one who possesses wisdom. This is whom we should be learning from. At that time, the most important and difficult thing is to vanquish the ego. This ego may not necessarily mean that I am always right and you are wrong. It means that everywhere you carry this self-centered mentality – that is your obstacle – this is the sign of arrogance. So this arrogance can be known as “my view, my pride, my preference, and my ignorance.” The view is of course mine, and then my preference and my ignorance. You are always protecting this “me”, always is “me”! Alas, you are unable to tolerate if you [can’t please this “me”]! That is a type of my preference – this is just all in the midst of ignorance. When you truly study and practice the teaching, this [self-centeredness] has to be entirely swept away, totally wiped out, and then you will have achievements. So what would you do at this causal stage? I learn some and apply some, constantly pay attention to this [mentality of self-centeredness]. Well, here it comes, get rid of it! However much you can remove, your achievement will match accordingly. By doing this at the causal stage, gradually, the effects will appear.

[11A, 08.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 81 L1]

So now everyone thinks that applying the teachings is really difficult! Alas, with my current understanding, nothing in this world is easier than applying the teachings. Well, once everyone hears this, you will think, how can it be? I will tell you the logic right now. If you want to learn how to drive, now it's easy and available everywhere. But, sorry, if you don't have a car, can you learn? If you have a car but no road, can you drive? With a road but no gasoline, can you drive? With gasoline but no one to teach you, can you drive? You are still relying on these conditions! This is even the case for riding a bike, right? [This applies] to everything we do! As for meditation, well, it's your personal business and all you have to ... [unless you] have brain damage then [meditation] is not possible! With a damaged brain, it is difficult to accomplish anything. As long as your brain functions and your motivation is focused on it, right? What else is easier than that? [Applying the teachings] requires a very minimal condition – just sitting here, the teachings can be applied. After engaging in various tasks during the day, resting at night is of course necessary! Well, practice the teachings, even while you are sleeping. While working on a task, you will still need to take a break for meals! During meals, the teachings can still be applied. So once you truly understand, all twenty-four hours can be applied to meditate on the teachings. Every moment of the twenty-four hours can be spent purifying obstacles and accumulating merits. Thus, meditating on the teachings is just this easy!

[11A, 09.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 81 L11]

Why is that [we] are unable to have attainment? It is due to the lack of correct view! The lack of joyous perseverance! So what should we do now? First, destroy the ego¹, rely on

virtuous teachers², listen to the teachings³, and contemplate accordingly⁴. For these, it does not mean to divide into these four different steps! Whichever step you are at, you are mindfully meditating. So, my feeling now is that the actual difficulty in everyone's aspiration – the most difficult part – is encountering a virtuous teacher. Once the virtuous teacher is found, the real difficulty will be to tame this [ego]. As long as you have identified it, all of the following problems will be resolved. The Pure Land practice approach is a special case to this principle, an exception, which will be covered later.

[11A, 10.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 82 L1]

“Just as the sick,” like a patient relying on the doctor, this skillful doctor, well, well! Once [we] “rely on a teacher,” [we] should never be lazy. When truly relying on a virtuous teacher, never do so with a speck of laziness. This is specifically revealed to us in *the Array of Stalks Sutra* – which is the reason why youthful Sudhana accomplished his goal in one lifetime. Buddhism is not hard. It can certainly be achieved in one lifetime! The issue is whether you apply it accordingly! Think about this. Many things are much harder, and Buddha Dharma is this easy. Everything else can be interrupted, but practicing Buddha Dharma can take place continuously for 24 hours without interruption. Certainly achievement can come in one lifetime. So where is the problem? The key factors were all mentioned earlier. As long as you overcome the key factors one at a time, then everyone is youthful Sudhana. This is the most perfect guidance stated in *the Array of Stalks Sutra*.

[11A, 11.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 82 L8]

So, I said before that if you understand this teaching, this commentary, then you would know the difference between the

Lotus Sutra and *the Array of Stalks Sutra* - why Buddha came to this world. Actually, the true intent of the *Lotus Sutra* is also in *the Array of Stalks Sutra*. The other day, I started to talk about it, here [I] will explain briefly. Well! It was specifically mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra*: seems like it has been spinning around for a long time. Well, the story in the *Lotus Sutra* I have mentioned in passing! If you have not heard of it, review it later; those who already know about the *Lotus Sutra* should be able to understand the story right away.

[Note: please refer to translation book 1, 3A for the story in *Lotus Sutra*, Buddha came to this world to show us there is only one vehicle to achieve Buddhahood – Mahayana.]

[11A, 11.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 82 L13]

In the beginning of the *Lotus Sutra*, the sravakas and others fulfill the predictions of their upcoming enlightenment, one by one, and even an ordinary being “with slightly lowered their heads and palms together can achieve the Buddha’s path.” But to accomplish this, there is an incredibly long distance to travel! Thus this is ultimately the reason for Buddha to come to this world. To validate this reason, the stupa of the Precious-Treasure-Tathagata was used [Chapter 11 of the *Lotus Sutra*]. Then, through various manifestations of Shakyamuni Buddha’s blessings, the door to the precious-treasure-stupa opened. Thus, those who came along thought, “That was it, let’s go back now!” Well! At that time, what did Shakyamuni Buddha say? “Wait just a moment, don’t go back yet. Do you want to see the effects of disseminating of the *Lotus Sutra* in our world?” Upon saying this, Bodhisattva

Manjusri arrived. Arriving from where? Arriving from the palace of the Nagas. Wow, why did countless beings come here? [Buddha] was teaching the *Lotus Sutra*. [Manjusri was] asked, “What have you been doing?” “I was teaching the *Lotus Sutra* in the palace of the Nagas.” “Well, since you were teaching the *Lotus Sutra* there, what was the effect?” “Look!” When [Manjusri] said this, the daughter of the Naga appeared. The story of “*Achieving Buddhahood at the age of Eight.*” Do you all know of it? Notice the immediate transformation [of the daughter of the Naga]!

[Note: *Lotus Sutra* chapter 11: after Buddha went into his nirvana, this Precious-treasure-stupa would arise wherever the *Lotus Sutra* was taught. This chapter validates it.

Chapter 12: Buddha announced that he was about to enter his nirvana and Manjusri was able to continue teaching the *Lotus Sutra*. Buddha asked Manjusri about the effect of Manjusri’s teaching in Naga palace. Manjusri replied: see for yourself. That was when the eight-year-old Naga daughter appeared and proved her immediate enlightenment to all.]

[11A, 13.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 83 L8]

Of course, there are many crucial points here. It reveals... we should see it this way. Bodhisattva Manjusri was at the Naga palace expounding on the reason behind Buddha’s arrival in our world. You cannot simply just read the version of the *Lotus Sutra* that we have now. That is to say, you must grasp the true intent and concept – the true intent of Buddha’s arrival, which is “to reveal the perception of the ultimate essence of the teachings.” Buddha revealed his immeasurable experiential knowledge in its entirety to sentient beings. [He]

also guides you to do the same – this is the real intent of the *Lotus Sutra*. So in fact, [the Naga daughter] achieved Buddhahood directly. Bodhisattva Manjusri said, “I taught it in the Naga palace, and what was the effect? See for yourself!” Immediately, the Naga daughter generated the spirit of enlightenment, and promptly attained Buddhahood! Isn’t it true? Upon actual understanding, you will view it from this perspective [rely on teacher and teaching] to capture the most precious point of the quintessential parts of Buddha Dharma. This [concept] is not just referring to the perfect Buddha Dharma and it applies to all beings.

[11A, 14.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 84 L1]

There is another aspect. How wonderful! That is, the Buddha was here teaching the *Lotus Sutra*, and most of the audience had circling around for a long time. Someone else was teaching the *Lotus Sutra*. It was someone who was not a Buddha, but a Bodhisattva, who taught in the Naga palace for a while resulting in the achievement [of the Naga daughter] in one lifetime. Have you noticed this? Do you have any doubts? These are questions of great importance! The best answer to this story can be found in *The Array of Stalks Sutra*. *The Array of Stalks Sutra* is the most excellent sutra, yet Buddha did not teach it! In the very first section, for example there were worldly beings gave teachings, well, local spirits and deities were one by one engaged in discussion. So and so earth deity, deities in the heavens, this deity and that deity; even up to the Bodhisattvas – but the Buddha did not impart [in this Sutra]! Until the very end, the youthful Sudhana had visited fifty-three teachers – it was the same with those who had visited. The first one was a monk, the second was a monk, and the rest were lay-practitioners, and the last one was a monk. Of course,

in between there were [other] monks and nuns. Especially in the end, there were earth deities, forest deities, wind deities, so and so deity, and so forth! Well, it is strange! The majority of the disciples at Buddha's teaching were Arhats, yet [in this Sutra,] Buddha did not teach. However, the youthful Sudhana achieved [ultimate enlightenment] in one lifetime, and this is the content [of *The Array of Stalks Sutra*].

[Note: *The Array of Stalks Sutra* is also known as *Avatamsaka Sutra*]

[11A, 15.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 84 L12]

And then the same in the *Lotus Sutra*, well, well, well! Buddha, after all his teaching, said, "I have taught you over many lives and eons, but you never listened to me. So, even though I shower you with rain of nectar, you can only receive so little. Small grass absorbs a little and, out of it grows one blade of small grass. Medium grass absorbs little bit more, and out of it grows medium-sized grass. Large grass absorbs more, and out of it grows large grass. Even the trees are the same. Thus, although I have provided the best Dharma to you all, you are circling in a big loop!"

[Note: this part is from chapter 5 of the *Lotus Sutra*]

[11A, 16.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 85 L2]

You may ask, will this be useful to us? [Yes, it is] useful. Let's reflect on it carefully – upon hearing the virtuous teacher's teaching, have we applied it accordingly? After we hear it, "well, it can't be done! I am now an ordinary being, ask me to do this – it can't be done!" What is that? You are already completely rejecting it. That is, I absorb my little share as small, medium, or large grass. Once you are able to "practice

according to the teachings, serve with greatest respect” and “seek earnestly.” Then it is the right attitude and your achievement in one lifetime is possible! The perception is explained here, plain and clear. Think about it, isn’t it right? So this is the second idea, well, knowing that I am sick – [I must] find a doctor. After you have found a doctor, then what? Take the medicine! So,

[11A, 16.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 85 L8]
3. Think of the instructor’s explications as medicine. Just as a sick person has a high regard for the medicine prescribed by a doctor,

With the medication prescribed by the doctor, properly abide by it.

[11A, 17.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 85 L10]
so too, you should view the instructions and explications that the instructor gives as very important, taking great pains to hold them in high esteem, and not squandering them by lapses such as forgetting them.

Buddha is also the same, much like a doctor. Buddha has no way to just take us in and bless you to make you a Buddha. Buddha can only provide you with the proper teachings from his experiential knowledge. You must apply the teachings accordingly. It is very clear, both theoretically and practically. All Buddhas are without exception, endowed with great love and compassion. There are no exceptions – they all have great wisdom. His loving and compassionate heart is set to help all beings, his wisdom understands all phenomena, and he is capable of accomplishing it all. If he can instantly transform us into Buddhas, of course he would do so! Since

that has not happened yet, clearly this means that it does not work this way. All Buddhas have said, “I cannot turn you into a Buddha, hence, I can only tell you how to achieve it. However, achievement depends whether you can practice the teachings accordingly.” Doctors are like the Buddha. He gives you this explication and once you hear it, then, wow, this is so important! What should be done? “Take great pains to uphold them.” Strive hard. This is what we should hold in high regard. We should not grasp on to this “self” and say, “Alas, I cannot do it!” Do not become attached to this view, do not become attached to sentiment, but rather become attached to the teachings. If you are able to do so, then it is correct.

[11A, 18.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 86 L9]

Please turn to [page 58] in the Lamrim text. Among the six ideas, the first one is to think of yourself as a sick person – with the great sickness of ignorance, the great sickness of ignorance - this is the root of all illnesses. This is what we should first recognize when studying Buddha Dharma. This concept is very important, too important! Right now, the majority of us has heard and understood the root cause in theory, but is not able to accomplish it. In reality, this is due to the lack of a proper understanding of this concept. [Our] understanding is only literally at face value, and then [we] turn around to teach others the meaning of those words. There may be a little effect, and some virtuous seeds are planted. But as far as the entire perspective of Buddha Dharma, the immediate effect will not arise now. Not only will this effect not occur, it will very likely turn into a cause of contention. This is what we should sincerely regret and mindfully strive to repent and transform. Thus, the key point is that the reason why the Lamrim commentary teaches us in stages, step by step, is to

tell us how we should apply the teachings that we have heard physically and mentally to filter out the defilements and then gradually purify and accumulate merits, cleansing ourselves. Once you are able to purify yourself, then, at that time, [you] are able to share with others, this is truly propagating the teachings!

[11A, 20.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 87 L3]

So for those of you sitting here, this is a very rare occurrence to come by; in the future, you will all become great monastic representatives. At this time, I would like to encourage everyone. Everyone should be inspired with the aforementioned intention instead of being eager to teach. Do not busy yourselves with giving teachings, because there are already too many people giving average teachings! We should further advance ourselves and at least know how to self-purify physically and mentally. By then, sharing the teachings with others will be significant and the benefits will be greater. The goal of the teaching is for physical and mental purification. You have to purify so at least you know what is wrong within. That is how it works. It is not just literal – attachment, hostility, and ignorance – the words are easy to recognize. To physically and mentally identify the attachment, hostility, and ignorance within us is crucial. Once [you possess] this recognition, the next step is to know how to apply the remedies, what the disadvantages are of having [the three mental poisons], and the benefits of taming them. This is the process that [we] should know.

[11A, 21.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 87 L10]

The first thing is to realize that I am sick and, due to this illness, diligently search for a doctor. Once you have this, and

when you find the doctor, you will feel that the doctor is [your] best chance to cure the illness. Otherwise, it would be very inconvenient, and trouble will arise! Wherever we go, [we] seek education. To seek knowledge is a worldly affair – as long as we pay some tuition we receive some knowledge from the teacher, that's all. Everyone engages in mutual exchanges – worldly trading. Especially at the present stage, the teachers' words are not absorbed and the student's reluctance leads to contention. Now, it is the same for the renunciates, this [attitude] is of no help at all. It is totally ineffective.

[11A, 22.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 88 L1]

So I have already encouraged everyone to read the biographies of the teachers of the lineage, whether they are Chinese or not... Unfortunately, the biographies of Tibetan teachers' are hard to find now. Rarely do [we] encounter some Indian teachers' biographies, especially the *Biography of Venerable Milarepa*. I do encourage everyone to read it and find out how they attained their achievements and what the required teacher-disciple relations are, and then you will be able to truly tame your afflictions. Otherwise, our minds will be filled with afflictions, and whatever Buddha Dharma [we say] will be in vain, all empty words. So this is with regard to the second idea: virtuous instructor.

[11A, 22.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 88 L6]

Once you have found a virtuous teacher, his explications are like medicine. What should you do with the medicine? Then you go a step further to cure the disease. So now let's look at number four on [page 59 of the text]:

[11A, 22.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 88 L8]

4. Think of earnest practice as the way to cure your disease.

Now that we are aware of our illness, have found the doctor, and obtained the prescribed medication, the next thing is to take the medicine and cure the disease. This is the worldly way of taking medication for illness. Then, for the renunciates, our entire physical and mental attitudes should abide by the Dharma medication prescribed by the instructor; this is how to truly apply the teachings. If you have this understanding and practice accordingly, no matter what you engage in, the merits will increase and defilement will be eliminated. Regardless of whether you are prostrating, chanting Buddha's name, doing Zen meditation, practicing during daily morning and evening sessions, listening to the scriptural teachings, and even when you are sleeping or eating, every act [will accumulate merits]. Maybe we will say, "Alas, the ancient sages said that putting clothes on and eating are all [part of the practice] on the path – that is the state after enlightenment!" This is true. However, for us now the effect of enlightenment – what should you do at causal stage to achieve this effect? If, at the causal stage you didn't do anything, may I ask will the effect fall into your lap from the sky? Did Buddha Dharma ever talk about the effect falling from the sky? Of course not.

[11A, 24.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 89 L3]

So, at this causal stage of ours, what should be done? Apply the teachings. How should they be applied at the stage of study and at the stage of reflecting on the teachings? Take the stages of study and reflection as the cause, and then you will be able to achieve the corresponding effect! This is how it

works; the systematic order is very clear and obvious. So, for us now, that is what this perfect teaching has taught us at the present level. With this understanding to conform to the teachings in [our] mental streams – apply it daily, moment by moment, while walking, standing, sitting or lying down – this is truly proper meditation. So now let us continue,

[11A, 24.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 89 L8]
Sick persons know that their illness cannot be cured without taking the medicine prescribed by the doctor. They then take the medicine.

Like a patient, he knowingly recognizes, well, the doctor gave the prescription and also gave you the medicine. But if you don't take it, then the illness will not be cured. So we should immediately take it. Thus, for us now, it is:

[11A, 25.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 89 L11]
Likewise, earnestly engage in practice after you have seen that you cannot vanquish such afflictions as attachment without putting into practice the instructions given by the instructor. Do not devote yourself just to piling up words in great numbers without engaging in practice.

Regarding the instructor who gave us the teachings, you do not abide by their advice to apply the practice – to apply is to mend, and to practice is to repeatedly undergo trial and error based on the instructions and practice, practice, practice, just like that. What needs to be mended? That is, to mend our behavior, our previous actions aligned with ignorance and afflictions – the afflictive view (見惑) and the afflictive

sentiment (思惑). This is very important. Many of us have some petty cleverness – ah, we feel that this is the way to be. This type of petty cleverness will actually harm us. This is what has harmed us from beginningless time. Our only reliance is Buddha Dharma, so the very first task is to eliminate [ignorance and affliction]. The petty cleverness is our own views, which is the afflictive view, our worst enemy. As for our latent propensity, it is considered an afflictive sentiment, which corresponds with our emotions. So the further divisions [of afflictive sentiment] can be subtler affliction, ignorance, etc. Thus, to transform them, just one remedy is not enough. It has to be repeatedly worked on over and over again to form the habit of practice, and never forsake it.

[11B, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 91 L1]
English LR v.1 p.60

So, there are many obstacles in our learning of Buddha Dharma. The first major obstacle is that I want to apply the teachings, but don't want to listen. This concept has been cited many times before. However, this is not necessarily saying that it is the speaker's fault – for [we] have witnessed too many people talking much without behaving one bit according to the teachings. Thus, those inspired practitioners, sensing that the speakers were ineffective, thought, "this is not what I want." The aspiration is initially good; however, in this situation, the error is with the ones who deliver the teachings. This does not necessarily mean that genuine Buddha Dharma should not be explained or heard.

[11B, 00.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 91 L6]

Now, if the first obstacle is overcome, to really practice, you must recognize the concept of application. To understand this concept, [you] must listen – after listening, [you] actually need to apply it, to follow it. Well, say that [you have] heard it now and claim, “I got it, I got it” and do not put it into practice. Then, it is of no use. In this case, what is it like? One who has heard much and thinks that this is practice. Then the following fault is formed, “piling up words in great numbers.” Thus, the only thing you can do is to articulate the words, just like that. Ah! What the sutras say, what Madhyamaka (中观) says, what Cittamatrīn (唯识) says, what Hinayana says, and what Mahayana says... great numbers of reference books and a large amount of information – confusing others to the point of causing headaches, and thinking that this is Buddha Dharma. It is not so, not like that! This we must understand.

[11B, 01.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 92 L4]

Therefore, the modern [Chinese] Buddha Dharma since the Qing dynasty, is gradually recovering – various sects and schools are thriving. Especially the sect of the Dharma characteristic school – for example, Venerable Tai-xu, Mr. Ouyang-jing-wu, Mr. Han-qing-jing (韓清淨), and so on. I have heard others highly praising this [Dharma characteristic school] very early on. After I became a monk, I had the opportunity to read about it, and people told me: “well, this Dharma characteristic is very difficult to learn! This Cittamatrīn has too many terms, the more [you] study, the more headaches [you] get – memorizing them until your head spins.” In the beginning, I liked to chant Buddha’s name and had this same feeling [while studying Cittamatrīn]. It was not until several years later that I was lucky to clear away my obstacles. Wow, I found that

the Dharma characteristic is extremely wonderful! Its beauty is beyond description! When you are just beginning to learn the Dharma, [Dharma characteristic] is your only path. If you forsake this path, I think that the other routes would be very tough. Of course unless you are endowed with great virtuous roots, because you would already have practiced in the past lives.

[11B, 02.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 92 L12]

So what is the key point? According to my experience, if you perceive the Dharma characteristic as mere words, then there will be problems. Many people are endowed with this tendency from past lives – they are like scholars who encounter books, the more the merrier, and [they] can speak about the books with great reasoning. But after finishing the speech, that is it. With respect to practice – to take another step forward – they would just pause there for the time being. In this case, for those who are not fond of reading, [to study Dharma characteristic] is a matter of suffering.

[11B, 03.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 93 L1]

But, is Dharma characteristic truly like this? No – whatever the indicated appearance of the Dharma is, that is the Dharma characteristic. You refer to attachment – what is attachment like? You refer to anger – what is anger like? You have to recognize it! At that time, you definitely have to rely on the descriptions from the scriptures. This is known as Dharma characteristic – that is what it is referring to. The Dharma characteristic is not talking about the words that describe it! The words are only one millionth of what the Dharma characteristic is. Once you understand the Dharma characteristic, you will recognize it through its appearance.

Once you recognize it, you will then have the opportunity to remove it. Otherwise, if you don't recognize it and you want to apply the teaching to remove attachment, anger, and ignorance, what is attachment? [You have] no idea. What is anger? [You] do not know. How can you remove it? It is very clear. Much like pulling out weeds, you say you want to remove the weeds, but upon getting there, it is a vast indistinct field. That is of no use!

[11B, 03.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 93 L8]

Therefore, I often speak of this virtuous teacher of mine. When I first relied on him, several people around me often liked to joke about him. They said, this Dharma master – when everyone was already cleaning up the environment ... whatever he did, and he always applied his full energy. When cleaning up the environment, he was weeding in the flower or vegetable gardens. He always worked the fastest with complete focus. After he was done, you would find that not only were all the weeds gone, but also the vegetables and flowers. [We] often teased him about it, and I was one of them. Only now did I gradually realize: so the problem lies right here – you have to recognize [the weeds] first. Thus, the practice of the teachings must have two requirements: first is the correct view (正知见), and then joyous perseverance (精进行). The teacher I had just mentioned was endowed with both qualities. Because he had both qualities, he would never waste his energy on minor issues. If you asked him to take care of something, he would not be aware of many things, but he would firmly hold on to the real important points. Well! That is why now, and for the rest of my entire life, I cannot cease to admire and be grateful to him. Also, this is where I have obtained benefits.

[11B, 04.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 94 L2]

This may be a joke, but the point I want to clarify is that, now, if we are talking about meditating on the application of the teachings, even though you admittedly may not know anything about gardening, of course you may pull everything out in the beginning. However, if you were told to grow vegetables, and then you did the same thing, how could you grow vegetables? Now, it is to plow our mental fields, what are the weeds in your mind? You don't know which ones should be kept. With a complete lack of discernment, will you be able to apply practice? Thus, this recognition is required – that is to say, this is the true Dharma characteristic. From now on, the emphasis here will rely on this direction [focusing on the Dharma characteristic]. This is for everyone to pay attention to understand. Otherwise, you will be unable to forgive yourself. We are capable of being a nice worldly person, yet [we have] renounced it and come to [the monastery] – wouldn't you be wasting your entire life?

[11B, 05.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 94 L9]

Therefore, we are told not to pile up words in great numbers here. Rather, you rely on this guidance to recognize and, if applied accordingly, that will simplify matters and save a lot of effort! With any of your actions, the mental stream will remember it and know what it is. And then, if the intention is wrong, you adjust to correct it. If the intention is correct, enhance it. At this time, you will feel immeasurable joy within. This is Dharma joy – all the objects in front of you will not affect you. Otherwise, you will constantly going around in circles, and even feel pleased about it. As a result of being pleased, you will experience downfall in the future and will

drag others down as well. This is very dreadful and very real. Let's continue.

[11B, 06.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 95 L1]
English LR v.1 p.60

Moreover, one or two doses of medicine will not do anything at all for lepers who have lost their hands and feet.

So we have practiced, but is mere application enough? It is not sufficient. Thus, the previous section advised us to engage in practice earnestly. What is considered earnest? Well, very seriously and sincerely. Why do we need to be so sincere? It is because since beginningless time, we have been in the long dark nights with the illness of ignorance, just as though we were seriously stricken with leprosy. This “skin disease” is leprosy! Once infected with leprosy, alas, the hands, feet, nose, ears, or any other parts will fall off. If stricken with such a serious disease, and you take just one or two doses of medicine, the effect will not arise. It will be totally ineffective. Therefore, the author continues:

[11B, 07.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 95 L7]

Similarly, to put the meaning of the instructions into practice just once or twice is insufficient for us whom from beginningless time have been stricken with the virulent illness of the afflictions. Therefore, analyze with discerning wisdom the entirety of every aspect of the path and make effort that is like a river's current.

From beginningless time, we have been stricken with the virulent illness of affliction. Although we now receive these complete teachings and understand the true intent imparted

by the Buddha, and you are able to practice, just once or twice is insufficient. But, suppose we do not even know [the teaching which is to be applied], then we would not even need to discuss this, no need to talk about it! Thus, honestly speaking, what should we do? “Analyze with discerning wisdom the entirety of every aspect of the path” – to completely understand the entire content, recognize everything, and then apply accordingly. Here, we may have some doubts: you say that you will practice after you have complete understanding, but how would that work? No, we need to understand that this is not what it means. Let me cite a simple example: for instance, we are going to build a high-rise building, construct a skyscraper. To do so, you are not required to complete it all at once. To construct such a building, you have to be certain about each step in the construction process and abide by the sequential order so it is certain to have no problems. However, if you can't grasp this and you probe here and there, it will be useless, totally of no help at all. I think we can all understand this.

[11B, 08.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 96 L4]

If you are randomly building a small house, and you say that will do. You just have to remove some weeds, make a bigger space and it is good. In case it is not built correctly, you would just start over again, this can be done. Can you do the same when building a skyscraper? You definitely have to make sure that each step is completed very thoroughly. It is absolutely not like building a house, where I just put together bricks and cement and be done with it. Once you have moved in all of [the building materials], I am very sorry, when the contractor says you need to dig the foundation, what would you do? Move them out again? Move them out and then start

over again. After you have moved things around a few times – that money is certainly spent, the reinforcing steel has rusted, and cement has hardened – it’s over! The same principle applies to us. This life of ours passes by very quickly! If you squander it, then not too long afterwards, an entire life is over. Once this habit is formed, the next life will be the same. You hastily encounter it again [with the same latent propensity] and afterwards sensing the need to start all over again, there goes an entire life again. This is assuming that you don’t encounter major shortcomings! If there are shortcomings, a human form will not be obtained in the next life, and [you will] end up in the hell realm. This detour will take unknown length of time – that is the true reality!

[11B, 09.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 96 L13]

Therefore, you need to grasp what he wrote, “the entirety of every aspect of the path.” Just as if we were building a house, I wouldn’t hastily start building. First, [determine] how big the house I am building will be, then hire a qualified architect to design the blueprint, and determine how to advance one step at a time. It may appear that you have not done anything yet, however, once you start, the progress will be smooth and the high-rise will be constructed. Isn’t it very simple? Therefore, from the beginning, I specifically told you all: everyone should remember the true reality from both the *Array of Stalks Sutra* and *Lotus Sutra* and abide by the teaching, just like that. When we actually begin to apply, [we] must delve into it profoundly. Just like building a house, at the actual time of construction, [we] must abide by the systematic steps in their entirety – this is a “royal path!” The actual precious value of Lamrim is right here. It is right in here. Once you have grasped this, strive at it and during the process, “make effort that is like

a river's current." This river's current is like a cascading waterfall, the stampede of a thousand horses, never ending.

[11B, 10.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 97 L7]

Here, the author told us to apply the practice it is very interesting! He did not tell us: you need to hurry up to prostrate to Buddha, neither did he tell you to quickly chant Buddha's name, nor rush you into Zen meditation. What did he tell us to do? "Analyze with discerning wisdom." This is what we really need to do now. What does this "analyze with discerning wisdom" mean? The reason that we are ordinary beings is due to ignorance and wrong views. The only remedy that we have to counter it is wisdom – the wisdom arises from listening, wisdom arises from reflection, and wisdom arises from meditation. Listening begins with the excellent teacher. The accurate instructions are obtained from the excellent teacher – which is from an external source. Once you have listened with understanding, what would your first step be? It is reflection. This reflection is to continuously analyze the concepts understand it from hearing – well, is this right? Is this wrong? What is this about? What should be analyzed? Analyze [your] mental attitude. This task is extremely important – thus, it is known as "inner study" (内明), the so-called mind training.

[11B, 11.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 97 L15]

Thus, ancient scholars always told us: return to the true nature – return to the true innate state. What does this mean? Turn around, look for the problems from within your own mind; this is the true Dharma characteristic, the real Dharma characteristic. And from where does the nature in our mind streams arise? There are several causes. In short: first it is the

mental seed from beginningless consciousness (無始的識種) and the attraction from external objects interacting with the faculties – “the combination of all three [consciousness, object and faculty].” Because the conventional world emphasizes psychology and physics, the inner and outer are two unrelated matters. Whereas Buddha Dharma is not so, this we have to recognize. It is not the monism [the belief that the world is made up of a single substance] either, it is dependent-arising. When we refer to a given mental attitude, there must be an external object. You look at this person and when this person smiled at you, well, you feel happy. You notice that this [food] is delicious, and you become attached. This other person glared and yelled at you, so you are angry. Thus the anger and attachment are in your mind, but they are related to the external objects. This will be reviewed later. I just mentioned it in passing here.

[11B, 12.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 98 L9]

So at this point, what should we rely upon? Analysis and reflection – this is known as proper contemplation (正思維).

And, with accurate intention (如理作意), this is our very first step in applying the teaching. Due to our analysis and contemplation, we realize that our mental stream is constantly filled with erroneous thoughts from beginningless time, like a river’s current! Thus, the only approach for now is to stop it. There are various methods [such as the six-mindfulness]: mindfulness of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; generosity; ethical discipline; deities, etc. Within this there is a laudable approach. You chant Amitabha Buddha’s name and, at that time, you will understand to chant wholeheartedly. While chanting, of course [mindfulness is required]! Afterwards, you

also continuously analyze the correct view, recognize the correct view and make sure it is appropriate, then continue chanting. If it is incorrect, bring it back. So, from here, you apply a remedy to produce this effect of reciting Buddha's name. [Or] the remedy to produce the effect is to prostrate to Buddha, circumambulate, or meditate in a seated position – the essence of all these practices begins from here. So in the Noble Eightfold Path*, correct view is followed by correct contemplation! This systematic order has its required course; the best guidance in applying the teaching is right here.

[*Noble Eightfold Path: correct view, correct intention, correct speech, correct action, correct livelihood, correct effort, correct mindfulness, correct concentration]

[11B, 14.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 99 L4]
As the great Candragomin's *Praise of Confession*
(*Desana-stava*) says:

Our minds are constantly confused;
We have been ill for a very long time.
What is achieved by the lepers
Who have lost their arms and legs and only
occasionally take medicine?

Therefore, the next great teacher said: Our minds are constantly in the midst of the long dark nights of ignorance since beginningless time. [We are] confused and enshrouded by ignorance, so our normal habits and understanding correspond to the great illness of the three mental poisons. What is this illness like? Among all illnesses, the most serious one is leprosy, alas! The arms and legs are lost. In order to cure it now, just a little bit of medicine will not work! Next:

[11B, 15.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 99 L10]

Thus, the idea of yourself as a sick person is extremely important, for if you have this idea, the other ideas will follow.

This idea is the most important. Once your recognition of this arises, all the others will follow. This idea, whether it is effective or not, has the most direct impact on our capacity to apply the teaching. Now that the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and great teachers in the past have provided us with this concept, but what does our ability to apply it depend on? It depends on accurate contemplation. Immediately prior to accurate contemplation, there is another critical point. Thus, later, gradually, we will abide by the systematic order to discuss and apply it step by step. So, at this point here, tomorrow I will briefly explain to everyone about the future plan. So this time, conceptually, the teaching of the institute is in complete unison with the monastery, in complete unison. We hope that every practitioner will receive the corresponding benefit. Otherwise, if this was not the case, then what would the effect be?

**[11B, 16.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 100 L5]
However, if this idea is mere words, then you will not put the meaning of the instructions into practice in order to clear away the afflictions, and you will have been merely listening to these instructions.**

If this idea or concept is merely empty words – speaking logically with exaggeration or listening with great interest – when the speech is over and one has finished listening, the book is closed and the old self returns, then this is mere words. In this situation, “in order to clear away the afflictions” for the sake of removing afflictions, put the instruction into practice. If

we merely enjoy listening to it, then this is meaningless. What would that be like?

[11B, 17.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 100 L10]
This is like sick persons who seek out a doctor.

If you found a doctor, but did not take the medication, would it be useful? Would it help?

[11B, 17.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 100 L12]
If they apply themselves only to getting the medicine prescribed, but not to taking it, they will not be freed from their illness.

One would not be freed! Up to this point, I believe many of you sitting here may feel: “Precisely! It is not that I don’t want to practice, I want to, but why can’t I be motivated?” Do you have this thought? Do you have this type of soreness? I believe that many of you do. Thus, last time I asked a question. I said that we already understood it but we just can’t make it happen. What seems to be the issue? Now, we must find the root cause of the illness [we] need to identify it. Actually, later in this text, the so-called instruction or lesson may not be limited to this treatise. Any instructions from perfect lineages are included – they will guide us to the best route, the best guidance. The virtuous teachers, the Buddha and Bodhisattvas have told and revealed this road map to us. So please pay attention here! Whether you practice or not depends on yourself. If you don’t abide by it, then even when the best approach is provided and you listen with great joy, but at this time, there is not much effect, there isn’t very much benefit!

[11B, 18.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 101 L8]
For, as the *King of Concentrations Sutra* says:

**Some people are ill, their bodies tormented;
For many years there is not even temporary relief.
Afflicted with illness for a very long time,
They seek a doctor, in search of a cure.**

**Searching about again and again,
They at last find a physician with skill and knowledge.
Treating the patients with compassion,
The doctor gives medicine, saying “Here, take this.”**

**This medicine is plentiful, good, and valuable.
It will cure the illness, but the patients do not take it.
This is not a shortcoming of the doctor, nor the fault of
the medicine;
It is just the fault of those who are ill.**

Let's pause here for a moment. This sutra tells us that when our body suffers from this physical illness, this suffering cannot be cured for years. So, due to being afflicted by this serious illness, one will seek a doctor. Searching for a doctor is painstaking. Fortunately, one doctor can be found that is truly excellent with skill and knowledge. “Skill and knowledge” means a very smart and knowledgeable physician. And this doctor is also willing to help us. Now, this physician is Buddha, the great healer. He not only has the wisdom to know how to save us, but he is also compassionate enough to rescue us. And this compassion and wisdom are unexcelled great compassion and great wisdom with complete understanding and without any flaws. All of our illnesses, the root cause, causes of the symptoms, and the state of being cured -

Buddha knows them all. Moreover, his compassion is ultimately perfected – [towards] every one of us without any exception – he wishes to deliver us to the final step. Before that step, Buddha will never give up. So, in this situation, this doctor told us to take this medicine. Certainly, now that we have received this great medicine, if we don't follow the prescription and take the medicine according to his method, then this is not the fault of the doctor or the medicine – it is the fault of the patient!

[11B, 20.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 102 L7]

At this point, I hope that you would be like me. We can close our eyes and think, what should I do? What am I suppose to do? This is the most important task. So now, we are fortunate to encounter and understand this teaching, then [we need to] encourage ourselves. We often have this “me, me, me” mentality, yes! Later, [v.2 p.197] tells us about “arrogance.” Why does it refer to arrogance here? It is not necessarily the average arrogance that we know. It is [the attitude] that I have to do it myself! I must make it happen! So the scripture teaches us to fight against whom? It is not to conquer others. It is to tame our own afflictions. This is a [task for] person of character and truly a great personal task. Fighting with others is of no use. Even if you don't fight with him, eventually he will die too. There is not one being who does not die. So you don't have to fight with him. Everyone will die. The greatest enemy eventually has to die too. So there is only one thing left! Well! This affliction is everlasting. If you can tame the affliction, then you are truly a great person. We need to have this aspiration!

[11B, 21.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 103 L1]

Likewise, after you have left the householder's life for the sake of these teachings

And have come to know the powers, meditative stabilizations, and faculties

How can you attain nirvana without making effort

At meditation, an effort at what is right?

Now, we generally understand the five faculties and five powers. These are the approaches for meditative stabilization and insight. If these are not followed or there is a lack of joyous perseverance, then there will be no way to achieve the actual experience and suffering will not cease. Thus,

[11B, 22.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 103 L4]

English LR v.1 p.61

Also:

I have explained this very good teaching.

Yet if you, having heard it, do not practice correctly,

Then just like a sick person holding on to a bag of medicine,

Your illness cannot be cured.

In this sutra, Buddha said:” I have already explained the most perfect teaching to you. If you do not practice accordingly, then it is like a sick person carrying a bag of medicine.” Well! The illness cannot be cured. This is what the sutra tells us. What does the Bodhisattva say in the commentary?

[11B, 22.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 103 L9]

Also, Santideva's *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds –for a person who is practicing to be like a Bodhisattva, how should we begin?

[11B, 22.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 103 L11]

Physically, put these instructions into practice;

What will be accomplished by mere talk?

Will sick persons be helped

By merely reading a medical treatise?

This requires physical application – merely talking is useless. Just like a physical illness, taking medication is required. It is not for you to recite the prescription; mere recitation is of no use.

[11B, 23.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 104 L1]

Therefore, “earnest practice” in the statement, “Think of earnest practice as what clears away the illness of the afflictions,”

Thus, we need to sincerely apply the practice. Knowing that this cures our illness, it will cure our illness.

[11B, 23.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 104 L3]

refers to putting into practice the lessons that a teacher has imparted to you on what should be adopted and what should be cast aside.

Well, what is earnest practice? It refers to putting into practice the essence of Buddha Dharma taught by the virtuous teacher. To know what to cast aside and what to adopt and abide by it accordingly, this is the proper attitude. When you want to put it into practice, there is one more condition!

[11B, 23.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 104 L7]

To do that, you need to know the lessons; for this, you need study. The purpose of knowing them through study is to do them.

So for you to actually practice, you have to know how to do it! In order to know how to do it, you must hear the teachings from a virtuous teacher! So, for us, the first gateway is listening. Upon hearing, proper and accurate understanding is needed. Then, based on that recognition, thoroughly follow it – this is upholding the application. [When we] talk about it, hearing is very easy. Actually, just recently, I realized that listening is not easy. I heard about this story and I later encountered it, too. It was said that, in the past, messengers in the military – [when they] didn't have the convenience of modern phones or telegraphs – so if there was an order, the messenger was called. Relaying the order was very interesting. In front of the commander, [the messenger had to] repeat after the commander once, and then the messenger was asked, “You repeat it again!” Just like that. We hear this and find it strange – does such simple statements need to be repeated? Well, yes, it is required, and once was not enough; it usually had to be repeated twice. At that time, I thought it was strange. Later, I tried it myself and heard about this from others, and now, even telling others, you all can give it a try, try it.

[11B, 25.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 105 L6]

Yesterday, some minor thing happened. Years ago, I remember there was a fellow classmate who I told something, and he [replied] – “I know, got it!” Then, he was asked to repeat what I said in simple terms. He took a long time and mumbled for a long time, but it was far from correct. I realized

that it isn't just him. Thirty or forty years ago, I had the same experience. Years later, you can all reflect on it. So we think we are in this situation: that we hear it and understand – it is not so simple, it is not that simple at all!

[11B, 25.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 105 L11]

Therefore, this is why, after hearing, you must review it sincerely. For those who have already applied effort, sure, he already explored it for a long time, upon hearing it – ah! The essential points were captured and he understood them. These are the people in the minority. The majority hears it once – full of energy during the actual session, totally blanking out afterwards and returning to the old tendency. This is the reason why we refer to [someone who is] unable to study hard. This is absolutely true. So, here, I specifically mention this to encourage those who are sincerely striving to work hard – to be sure to adjust completely, to change to a different approach. This is why, in this academy, there will be a different set of approaches than from before; [I] just bring it up briefly. I will announce it tomorrow and by that time, it will be explained to you all, there is a very special reason. So now, we talk about this as the proper way to practice.

[11B, 26.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 106 L4]
Therefore, it is vital to put the meaning of what you have heard into practice as much as you are able.

Thus, for the concept of listening, relying on personal strength is most important. You have to apply immediately after hearing. It does not mean that after you have heard and understood, then you will immediately accomplish it. It will definitely not be accomplished, let me tell you. What was mentioned just now regarding hearing, if you are asked to

repeat it, you might not be able to do so. Are you able to make it happen? This is why listening and contemplating, etc. have their specific relationship.

[12A, 00.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 109 L1]
English LR v.1 p.61

Often, it should be said that everyone has this experience, only [we] don't pay much attention to it! Here, let me take a random example so that you can observe within to see if it matches. You all like to read newspapers, right? Or read something, right? Right now we don't have newspapers here, of course, that is obvious. I believe we all have this experience. Every morning, the first thing after getting up is to pick up a newspaper and read it vigorously. If you are asked after reading, "What's new in the paper?" May [I] ask, are you able to respond? Do you have any impression? You all think about it, [do you] remember anything? There is simply no impression! Ah, read it, and what was just [read]? For a major event, maybe you can remember; well, for the subsequent details, it is totally unclear. Often, too many things are like this for us. Think about it, is this correct?

[12A, 00.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 109 L8]

Thus, it is not saying: well, I read many books! After reading, [if] the mind is still confused, then where is the usefulness? So this is absolutely a fact! If you apply this same attitude to learn this Lamrim text, you are not benefiting yourself. You might waste your entire life! Not even recognizing [the proper teaching], yet talk about applying it. With this careless attitude, the possibility of encountering [the teachings] may not occur, but [you] claim to practice earnestly. Without earnest practice, the change [within] is impossible. [Monastics] come here and

consume the offerings on the table from laypeople's painstaking efforts; after returning from rebirth in the hell realm, followed by being reborn in the animal realm to repay these laypeople. This food is not easy to digest! They are not to be taken for granted!

[12A, 01.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 110 L4]

English LR v.1 p.61

In this vein, *the Verses about Hearing* says:

**Even if you have heard a great deal,
If you are not well restrained by the ethical discipline,
Then because of your ethical discipline you are
scorned
And your hearing is not excellent.**

Here again from the *Verses about Hearing*! Although you may have heard a great deal, if you are “not well restrained by the ethical discipline” ... this “ethical discipline,” which also is known as “sila,” requires some explanation: in simple terms, we can think of it as precepts. Does everyone know what ethical discipline means? Understand the meaning of “sila”? I cannot say that you understand, but I believe that not too many people are familiar with it. At least for me, I am still unclear about it even now. I am telling you the truth – to talk about “sila,” I knew how to write this word decades ago and had given teachings about it. However, my true understanding, begins gradually as for now. What does ethical discipline mean? It means taming, coolness, and liberation. [Have we] been tamed? Not yet. Upon facing affliction, [we] are totally subdued, have you truly understood? Since you are unable to tame [afflictions], how can you understand [ethical discipline]? We mentioned the car. Drawing the shape of a car is fine.

What does the car look like? How is the car driven? How does it work? Do you really understand? If ethical discipline is straightforward and only to be talked about, then Buddha Dharma does not have much meaning at all. The real benefit of Buddha Dharma is to tame affliction and liberate beings. Now, your mind is not tamed, how can you claim that you understand? Yet I can't say that there is completely no understanding! So here, everyone should be aware of this – “not well restrained by the ethical discipline”! If you have this lack of understanding, how can you abide by it? This is the true intended meaning!

[尸羅 Sila = (Sanskrit) morality]

[12A, 02.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 111 L2]

My sense is not to say, “Wow, today [I] took the precepts!” You can start to apply the teachings. Thus, after taking the precepts, followed properly by application and abiding by them appropriately – study it step by step, this is the starting point! Just like entering school, it does not mean that once you enter school you are an engineer! Even after graduation, [you will] not necessarily become an engineer, let alone when you first start school. Thus, the 250 [monastic] precepts are recorded in the text of ethical discipline! They are for you to mindfully tame your afflictions one by one. Once quelled, you will have the feeling of coolness. Then you will be freed from contaminated deeds that will be the time you more or less understand [ethical discipline], this is how it works!

[12A, 03.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 111 L8]

So, last night when everyone was here for the Upavasatha, many came to confess. Ah, seeing that, I truly appreciated and rejoiced! Although we are beginners, as long as [we] persist

with it, the deep advancement will gradually arise. [We] should never just focus formalities, yet [we] can't forsake formalities. The rite is the most important [tool] to support our advancement. Just as though we are learning to drive, the car is very important, [we] need to become familiar with it [so to know it well]. Now it is the same with observing ethical discipline. If you do not protect the precepts due to your flawed observation "of the ethical discipline," because your application of it is missing, the restraint is poor! Thus, even if you have heard a great deal, you are scorned due to insufficiencies [in your ethical discipline]. Hence, this hearing of yours is flawed.

[Upavasatha: Buddhists' day of observance – <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uposatha>]

[12A, 04.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 111 L14]
Even though you have heard very little,
If you are well restrained by the ethical discipline,
Then because of your ethical discipline you are praised,
And your hearing is excellent.

Although you have heard very little, you can abide by this accordingly. Because of your proper application, well, then that would be on the right track, that application is correct!

[12A, 04.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 112 L2]
Persons who have not heard much
And are also not well restrained by ethical discipline,
Are scorned on both accounts,
And their conduct is not excellent.

There is another type of person who has neither heard much of the teachings nor behaved accordingly [with ethical

discipline], [they are] insufficient in both [hearing and upholding]. That is hopeless!

[12A, 04.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 112 L4]

**Those who have heard a great deal
And are also well restrained by ethical discipline
Are praised on both accounts,
And their conduct is excellent.**

As for the last type – [those who have] heard a lot and applied accordingly – they have done both. That is excellent.

[12A, 05.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 112 L6]

Also:

**Though you might understand the heart of the
scriptures through hearing,
And might know the core of meditative concentration,
Such hearing and knowledge are of little import
If wildly you engage in coarse behavior.**

Also, it says, even the virtuous teacher is now telling you the most complete instructions; and you also understood accordingly, abided by it and realized the certainty of its true benefits. For our worldly busy engagements are illusory, only actual application [of the teachings] is assured and steadfast. However, if you recognize it but lack earnest application, your “wild engagement in coarse behavior” will keep you in dysfunctional tendencies and wrongdoings. With this, your hearing and understanding are of little significance!

[12A, 05.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 112 L12]

English LR v.1 p.62

**Those who delight in the teachings taught by noble
beings**

**And practice accordingly with body and speech,
Who have patience, delight their friends, and are
restrained –
They will attain the perfection of hearing and
knowledge.**

If you are delighted to hear the teachings taught by noble beings, upon hearing and understanding then followed by flawless application, [you will] actually become “patient, delighted with your friends, and restrained.” The “restrained” effect automatically arises from the fulfillment of faith. Regarding the true characteristics of Buddha Dharma – positive, definite, meritorious, and capable – they will transform [practitioners] from contamination to purity, and illuminate the teachings with the certainty of aspiration. For those genuine practitioners, the people around them will be delighted. By doing so, you will bring delight to others. Thus, you uphold the teachings profoundly in “guarding the root [of our faculties]” – this is the protection of our six faculties. This is where [we] obtain the benefit of hearing. And then you will be able to cross to the other shore, reach the [enlightened] side.

[12A, 07.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 113 L6]

Earlier, we were taught “The result of hearing is to engage in substantive practice; you will be released with little difficulty from the fortress of rebirth.” [v.1 p.57] There are three things in the first part of this sentence that must be in consecutive sequence – hearing, being engaged, and substantive practice. The teachings are heard, and then our minds are engaged and transformed from the latent propensity of ordinary beings to align with the teachings. Once transformed, practice

accordingly. This is the true essence for us. With little difficulty, you can be released from the fortress of rebirth and further help others. So, in every aspect we are guided to [this direction].

[12A, 07.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 113 L11]

Also the *Exhortation to Wholehearted Resolve* says:

**The foolish are sorrowful at the time of death,
Saying, “My practice was poor. Now what is to be done?”**

**Not having found depth, they will suffer greatly;
Such are faults of delighting in just the words.**

Here, it is saying: I am not applying the teachings properly now and spend time wastefully! With this, upon death, at the final moment, it will be too late to regret. People like this are ignorant beings! By being attached to the small advantages at our presence now, upon death, it is too late to repent, why? Because, by then, they have not “found depth” [in the teachings]! This is our foundation; our liberation relies on this [applying the teaching accordingly]. At that time, suffering arises. What caused these kinds of regret and suffering? “Delighting in just the words,” just words of empty talk! This is a major flaw, a great mistake.

[12A, 08.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 114 L4]

Also:

**Like an actor before an audience watching a show
Or like describing the good qualities of someone else
who is a hero,**

**You fall from earnest practice yourself –
Such are the faults of delighting in just the words.**

Like when we go to a show, what is there to watch in the theater? Well, watching those people fighting on the stage, “Wow, great!” We watch others, cheer, and applaud. For yourself, you take no part in it, none! No part of it! You have to apply it! This is the proper approach! So, again and again, this demonstrates that we are all at the superficial level of language and words. Alas, at this moment we are truly pathetic, very pitiful! I was like that. Later, I met many fellow practitioners and often thought: “Alas, this I know and I understand it all. Well, [I have] studied for years.” The effect of several years of study turns out to still be outside of the door [with respect to the teachings]. And even contrarily claiming that study is no use. Alas, it is truly pathetic and ridiculous! The issue is right here. Granted that the understanding is there, but [if the practitioner] does not practice accordingly, then the application is still not there, it is still of no use!

[12A, 10.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 114 L13]

To use our present state as an example, we often think that applying the teachings and the tenet instructions are two different things. For example, especially nowadays, we often talk about the mind-only and middle-way views. In my opinion, no matter whether it is the mind-only or middle-way, both of them are the best guidance for our practice, absolutely helpful! In order for you to clearly understand the activity of the mind – Dharma characteristics! Nothing is better than understanding Dharma characteristics, which is also the only approach. However, uprooting fundamental problems relies on the middle-way. In other words, the root issue, for you to achieve the function [of recognizing our mental action] is dependent on Dharma characteristics. It is like cars, how do you make it to run? Using your understanding of the principles of the engine,

you apply it to a car. If you put it on the ground, the rotors of the engine will gyrate to become a vehicle. If you put it in the sky, it becomes an airplane. The Dharma characteristics will not miss anything; the coordination has to be there!

[12A, 11.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 115 L7]

If you truly understand this, then everywhere in our daily lives, there is nothing but this application at different degrees. The [Dharma characteristics] can be applied in simpler cases as well as the most complicated ones. Moreover, nothing will function without [the Dharma characteristics]. Now, we study for a while, and it makes us become good at using refined words. However, during practice, we say that these words are unnecessary. Alas, this is surely very pathetic! Very pitiful! And absurd! Thus, if we gradually advance from here, we will reach the proper path. Even if it is not thorough, this path is absolutely accurate! Positively correct!

[12A, 11.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 115 L12]

Also:

**The husk of a sugarcane stalk has no substance at all,
The taste that delights is inside,
Through eating the husk,
The delicious taste of molasses cannot be found.**

The husk of sugarcane stalk has no taste. The taste that delights is inside! If one eats the husk, he will not taste the deliciousness. We mentioned a joke the other day, those that have not visited the southern part [of the country] before, say that the sugarcane is delicious, but the stalk is hard to swallow. They claim that the sugarcane is tasty but the stalk is difficult to swallow. The sugarcane is [eaten] for its juice, not for you to

swallow the stalk. Without knowing this, he tried to swallow it. Of course the taste is not delightful! Now, what is more absurd is that he spit out the sugarcane and only ate the stalk. Isn't this even more ridiculous! How absurd! Now we are committing the same mistake.

[12A, 12.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 116 L4]

**Just as it is with the husk, so it is with the words;
The “taste” is in contemplating the meaning.
Therefore, give up delighting in just the words,
Always be conscientious, and reflect on the meaning.**

At the moment, in our speech, the words are like the sugarcane. So, from the superficial speech and words, [we] fathom their meanings! These meanings referred to here is the taste of the sugar inside the stalk! Thus, we must be careful to stay away from mere words. But the words are where we begin – remove the husk, and then contemplate the intended meaning within. Do not be lazy! Do not slack! So at this point, for those studious ones, the recommendation here is to not spend your free time sitting in a gazebo, chatting in a group of three. Once you begin, the chatting lasts for half a day. You would be chatting there for half a day or even a whole day. It is useless! This is of no use!

[12A, 13.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 116 L11]

This is the fourth idea and is the most important one! In fact, each of these ideas is linked to the one before and the one after. [They are] consecutively connected. Once you have the first idea, the rest follow. But for the first idea to reach true attainment, rely on this [fourth] idea, rely on this one. At the same time, with the upholding of this practice, everything that you had previously heard, etc., will then be truly understood at

a deeper level, knowing it profoundly. Otherwise, you will continuously be trapped in the obstacles, tumbling slowly. Next, is the fifth idea:

[12A, 13.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 117 L1]
5. Think of the Tathagatas as excellent beings. Develop respect by remembering the one who set forth the teaching, the Bhagavan [Buddha].

Regarding [our attitudes] toward the instructor, consider him as the Buddha. In other words, Buddha is the instructor and we should show our respect. What is the significance? It does not seem to be closely related to the first few ideas. Directly from the perspective of application, this is our ... developing respect is the first important link for us to enter the Buddha Dharma. Without respect, nothing is possible - it is absolutely impossible! So everyone, please pay attention: regardless of who it is, if you plan to hear the teachings, never harbor an irreverent mentality. This attitude of disrespect is our greatest ruin, the greatest harm! Especially if he is a great master. You should not even despise an ordinary being, you would rather not sit down to listen. But, if you do listen to him – you have to be respectful. Although the “instructor” may vary, the “Dharma” was still taught by Buddha. Depending on how much respect you have developed, you will receive comparable benefit accordingly.

[12A, 15.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 117 L10]

Thus, yesterday we discussed the story of this old Bhikkhu who achieved four fruits, what was his attitude? Three words: focus, sincerity, and respect. Those three young Bhikkhus who took the ball and hit his head once... four times, and then he achieved the four fruits, just like that! This is why respect is

of primary importance. And then, besides this, there is another special reason. It is that we are truly inspired to apply perfect Buddha Dharma. What is perfect? The state of Buddhahood is perfection. That state is flawless. So if you think of the instructor as Buddha, one perspective is that it is due to your respect and you do not look for faults. Once [you] start to look for faults, the harm returns to the faultfinder, not the instructor. This is what we have to understand. Later, this [concept] will appear repeatedly. Once you have a tiny bit of a faultfinding attitude – the attitude of finding faults in others – it becomes the cause for you to be stranded in the suffering of cyclic existence.

[12A, 16.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 118 L2]

All Buddhas are the same; there is no exception for any Buddha. Buddha will not look for others' faults. Not because they cannot be seen, but because the Buddha always transforms others' flaws into merits. Well, all kinds of others' afflictions and inferior logic will evoke Buddha's compassion and wisdom. Because of Buddha's aspiration, he wants to help people and that is how Buddha functions. Once he sees the faults of others, he will try to find a way to help, this is how great wisdom is developed. If you can concentrate on this aspect, then the concern will be a lack of discrimination. However, we do not function like [Buddha]. We need to recognize this. Throughout our learning process, the same applies. We must apply accordingly in the same way and it is for our benefit.

[12A, 16.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 118 L8]

Furthermore, in applying Buddha Dharma, since it has to be thorough and complete, if you can be mindful of this instructor

as Buddha, then your perspective will be more profound, more extensive. Thus, [Buddha] is the role model for your ultimate goal. You will not stop at the level you are at now. This applies to everyone, which is also the hope of advancing step by step to ultimate perfection. Thus, it is not just for the present moment. It is not limited to the scope of what we should study now. Lastly:

[12A, 17.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 118 L12]
6. *Wish that the teaching will endure for a long time. Think, “How wonderful if, in dependence upon studying such teachings, the Conqueror’s teachings would remain in the world for a long time!”*

For this last one, toward “the teaching,” [we may] think: by listening to the teachings, how can we ensure that Buddha’s teachings will endure for a long time? Why? For what reason? Because all worldly benefits rely on Buddha Dharma, regardless of whether they are mundane or supramundane, all arise from Buddha Dharma. There are two benefits to this world from Buddha’s teaching: one is called high status, the other is certain goodness – also known as immediate advancement and ultimate enlightenment. The immediate worldly benefit is called high status. Upon completion of this, the effect is an “enlightened physical form.” From our initial stage of practicing step-by-step advance continuously, that is [moving toward this goal]. Thus, if we want to gain benefits, the Dharma must remain in this world for a long time. If Dharma remains in this world, then you are able to enjoy the teachings. On the other hand, if you can promote it, then your merits will increase. At the final completion state, it is this “enlightened physical form.” Thus, this must complement each

other – in our worldly view, the mind and external object are contrastive. Actually, in Buddhism they are mutually dependent, inseparable from each other. If one is good, the other is required [to be good as well]. One's goodness is also dependent on the other; there is a reciprocal relationship between the two. This is the first reason.

[12A, 18.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 119 L9]

The second reason: in our normal daily practice, though it needs to be precise and focused, the goal must be vast and complete. And Buddha is one such example – Buddhahood is to achieve the ultimate state of purification. In order to achieve this purified Buddhahood, this is the effect, and the initiating cause is right now. Thus, with our wish for Buddha Dharma to remain for a long time, [we need to] constantly advance to the final effect of ultimate enlightenment. So, our attitude towards the Buddha Dharma that we have heard, on one hand is to know our personal starting point and, on the other hand, extent it till the ultimate state of perfection is reached. The being is Buddha, the state is the enlightened physical form, and the cause is the present moment. So these are the fifth and sixth ideas. Thus, this is the basic concept that a practitioner of this perfect teaching should have. If the recognition of this perception is complete –the cause is accurate, then the effect will be solidified.

[12A, 20.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 120 L1]

These are the six ideas. Thus, we must abandon the three faults of a vessel and rely on the six ideas. If you can truly abide by this accordingly, would you think that we couldn't achieve [Buddhahood]? Of course [you] would, it is certainly possible! By then, besides the fact that others are earnestly

teaching us, we listen with focused attention. And, even if others come to make fun of you by holding a ball in their hands and tell you to sit in the four corners [of a room], this opportunity is rare for us to find, so our fear should be missing the opportunity! If he [the person with a ball in his hand] comes for me, I should be able to achieve arhatship, right? Therefore, what is truly important for us now is mainly to focus on personal purification. Next,

**[12A, 20.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 120 L6]
Furthermore, when you explain or hear the teachings, if your mind and the teachings remain separate, then whatever is explained will be inconsequential.**

Again, regardless of whether you are explaining or hearing the teachings, once you have finished explaining or listening, without apply attentively, the “mental stream” is physical and mental; instead of applying it physically and mentally, [you] let what was explained and heard remain separate – separating the physical from the mental. [You see] the verbal as one thing and your physical and mental aspects are set aside, engaging in something different from what [you have] said. Then whatever you have explained and heard are useless! Why? For this frequently used typical example of mine, my teacher told me that “so and so, you should be like this!” Then I replied, alas, sometimes verbally, sometimes grumbling within, “Hum! I’m only an ordinary person. I’m just an ordinary being!” That is, the teaching heard is one thing, but my body and mind are expressing something else. The original intent of the teacher was for you - the ordinary being - to practice. But I did not apply the instructed approach on myself physically and mentally and claim that I am an ordinary

being, just like that. Then why are you here? I constantly use this question to repent and question myself. I share my mistake with you and wish that you all could avoid it. If you can reduce this mistake, your advancement will be faster.

[12A, 22.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 121 L4]
Hence, listen in such a way that you determine how these teachings apply to your mind.

... And this will do great harm. Hence, listen in such a way that you determine how these teachings apply to your mind. Thus, for the sake of making a decision, what does it mean by decision? It is to distinguish what the teaching is trying to deliver. What does it indicate in our minds? Whether our current mental streams correspond to this teaching or not – if it aligns, then it is correct. It is good, how should it be enhanced? If the compliance is not there, how should it be improved and purified? This is our purpose of listening to the teaching, and it also is the aspiration of our explanation of the teaching, they share a common purpose.

[12A,23.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P121 L9]
For example, when you want to find out whether or not there is some smudge, dirt or whatever, on your face, you look in a mirror and then remove whatever is there.

This is like when we try to find out if there is a smudge on our faces. [We] look into a mirror. Once spotted it and then try to remove it. The mirror is not used jokingly.

[12A, 23.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 121 L12]
Similarly, when you listen to the teachings, your faults such as misconduct and attachment appear in the mirror of the

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teachings. At that time, you regret that your mind has become like this, and you then work to clear away those faults and establish good qualities. Hence, you must train in the teachings.

[12A,25.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P122 L12]

Right now, the same applies to our hearing of the teachings, because of our lack of understanding of personal problems, so [we] come to listen. Upon hearing the teachings, the mirror of Dharma identifies all those faults in us physically and mentally – the proper way is like this, the wrong way is like that. By then, regret will arise in our mind stream, alas, much to [our] chagrin! And [you] say, “Why is my mental stream this terrible, in such a terrible state!” And then, with this understanding, having this unbearable mentality toward personal affliction followed by proper practice, this is the right approach – you may prefer to have more of this type of “faulty affliction.” As of right now, we are not there yet. We have not discovered our own faults and are only finding others’ faults. In addition, there is indolence in [our] attitudes. What is more pathetic is that we are in the midst of affliction and are completely unaware of it. This is very pitiful. The most pathetic part of humanity is unknowingly being submerged in affliction, which is truly pitiful! Thus, the only purpose of our study of Buddha Dharma is to identify the afflictions and to learn how to purify them. With this identification, then that is the time to start worrying, “Alas, how come I am so terrible! I must combat it, have to vanquish it!” With this [mentality], then we will have part of the practice.

Venerable Atisha brought the lineage of this Lam Rim to Tibet. Venerable Atisha's primary disciple in Tibet is Drom-don-ba, and another one is Ben Kungyal. This Ben Kungyal was a great bandit, wow! [He was] a fierce one. As a bandit, he was so dreadful that if a child was crying or fussing, as soon as "Ben Kungyal is here!" was mentioned, the child would stop immediately; it was just that effective. Legend has it that there was an old grandmother and people joked with her that Ben Kungyal was coming and everyone scattered. That grandmother was so scared that she died right on the spot. [He was] such a fearful person. Later, he encountered Buddha Dharma and embraced it, he devoted himself to practice, applying the teaching mindfully. How did he practice? This story is so very touching!

[12A,26.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P123 L5]

His teacher taught him many things, many instructions such as our prostration and chanting Buddha's name, morning and evening sessions. However, he didn't do any of them. He locked himself up and observed his mental stream and told himself, "Well, master has taught me that this is affliction. I must remove it and transform it." When one thought arose, he would say: "Ah, this thought is correct!" Ah, how happy, the joy of overcoming vicious thoughts. He made one hand represent virtuous thoughts and, when there was a matching thought, he would raise this hand and jump to celebrate, this was right! The other hand represented non-virtuous thought, and he would hit it, "You made the mistake again!" Slap! Slap! [He would] beat the hand until it became red and swollen. Moreover, he [drew] on the wall: if a virtuous thought arose, [he] marked a circle; otherwise if a non-virtuous thought arose, [he] would mark a black dot. [He] did nothing but this task,

which totally exhausted him. Every time he lay down, and then woke up to [continue] watch the mental momentum – what were the thoughts in the mind stream. After taught this by his teacher, he locked himself up to do just this.

[12A,27.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P123 L14]

Several months passed. Who was his teacher? That was Venerable Drom-don-ba, who had received the spiritual essence in its entirety from Venerable Atisha.

[Note: Story of Ben Kungyal:

In his room, he drew black and white circles on the wall to remind himself of his virtuous or non-virtuous deeds.

When his teacher Drom-don-ba came asked what he was doing, Ben Kungyal explained and the teacher praised him for his work of the mind.

He was a thief earlier in his life, and children would stop crying and old ladies would be scared to death when they heard his name. Once he began practicing the Dharma, he became a very great yogi. Although he lived in retreat in a small hermitage, he became quite famous and, one day, he received word that a high government official wanted to visit him. On the day when this important person was due to arrive, he broke with his usual routine and spent the morning cleaning his little hut, setting out incense and flowers, and making a special effort to beautify the place.

When he was finished with this lengthy effort, he sat down and thought about what he had done. “This is not my usual routine. What were all these preparations for?” he thought to himself. He realized that he had been acting purely out of a worldly attitude, wanting to impress his

important visitor. He saw that he had been motivated by pride and the desire for worldly esteem. What he had done was a wrong action based on a wrong attitude. The moment he realized this, he got up, went to his cooking fire, and took out a bowl full of ashes. Then he scattered ashes everywhere around his hut, rubbed ashes on himself, and generally made a big mess. When Teacher Drom-don-ba found out, he commended Ben Kungyal: that action was the real offering, the real Dharma!

Moral of the story: Ben Kungyal's action to make a mess in the hut was directed against the strong worldly attitude created by his inner obscuring affliction. Real practitioners are always watching their own minds, watching how they react to the events they encounter every minute of the day. They are always protecting themselves from creating non-virtuous karma.]

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[12B, 00.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 125 L1]

Venerable Atisha had many extraordinary disciples and he often visited them. One day, he went to visit Ben Kungyal. Ben Kungyal was so delighted to see his teacher, he wanted to pay the teacher great respect. [The teacher] asked, "What have you done lately?" [Ben Kungyal replied,] "Well, just these." His teacher did not know [what he was referring to] and looked at the wall, which was filled with black dots and white circles. "What! You have been busy the last few months with these?" "Well, yes! Just these!" [Ben Kungyal] reacted with great enthusiasm! [The teacher] was not pleased, "What is going on with this?" So Ben Kungyal then explained this and that. [The teacher said] "Oh. Yes! Yes!" and [the teacher]

prostrated to the wall, [Ben Kungyal] was such a true practitioner! So we shouldn't say: "hey, now I recite so many mantras each day, and, hey, I can sit in lotus position for so long; then my chanting is correct and yours is not!" I believe [this is the sign] that we are taking a detour on the path.

[12B, 00.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 125 L9]

Ben Kungyal later became a renowned teacher in his time. There were all kinds of stories about him that are still spreading now. Each of his stories is very touching. Once, he was with the Sangha community to receive offerings, and there were many monks. Since he was ordained later than others, he was seated in the back. The arrangement of their dining hall was like what we have now [by ordained seniority]; their arrangement was considered pretty good... The way Tibetans have their tea – when offering, they used butter tea, the top layer is thick with butter and the amount of butter gradually decreases toward the end of serving the tea. He sat in the back waiting patiently; at first, concentrating on studying, but later, the next thought arose, “[My] stomach is hungry and cold. Alas, by the time it will be my turn, there will be no more butter left on the top.” With this thought, he felt, “Ah! Ben Kungyal, here you go again!” So he vigorously glared with widened eyes, and took his alms bowl “pa!” flipped it over. [With the bowl] turned over, when the server came by: “Hey, you, it is your turn, take out your bowl!” He replied, “That terrible person has already eaten, he needs to starve today.” That server didn't know what he was doing: “You take it out!” “No, that terrible person has eaten already; he must starve well for one day!” Due to his generation of such a thought, he left his bowl that way. Thus, he eventually became a great virtuous teacher of his time – a model practitioner.

[12B, 02.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 126 L12]

Buddha taught us that he does not fear being bad. During Buddha's time, Angulimala [鴛堀摩羅 v.1 p.256; a ruthless killer] was so vicious, and there were all sorts of people like him. But later, they all became remarkable achievers. The concern is in being unwilling to transform, refusing to improve. Regardless of how intelligent you are this [unwillingness] would be of no use. Sunakssatra (善星比丘), and Devadetta (提婆達多) mastered reciting sixty thousand verses and thoroughly knowing everything, yet they were reborn into the unrelenting Hell (阿鼻地獄) [due to lack of appropriate practice]. Therefore, this text is specifically telling us what we should truthfully apply and earnestly work from here on! At this time, we should properly listen to the teachings and apply accordingly.

[12B, 02.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 127 L2]

The Garland of Birth Stories:

When I see the form of my misconduct

Clear in the mirror of the teachings

I develop a feeling of regret

And turn my mind toward the teachings.

The Dharma mirror illuminates the reflection of my despicable and abominable behavior. That is the time that I should be truly resentful and disgusted. So for a true practitioner, this attitude is required. Wasn't it the sixth patriarch (六祖大師) that said, "For a true practitioner, [you] will never see the faults of others." Regardless of whether it is

an Indian, Chinese, or any practitioner, it all should be the same – a true practitioner would not see the faults of others. Why? There isn't even enough time to reflect on the self! Once you have properly followed the teachings, then, upon seeing other [suffering] beings, [you] can hardly wait to help them! That is absolutely true! After you have properly helped others, you will achieve [your] Buddhahood. And life after life, continuing with this task, this [achievement] is certain. So this [reflection in the Dharma mirror] has to be our first step. And then, “develop a feeling of regret,” what is this regret for? Regret that I am not any better, and then mindfully focus on relying on the teachings.

With this statement Saudasa requested that Prince Sutasoma bestow the teachings.

[12B, 04.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 127 L10]

Previously, it was said that Saudasa invited Prince Sutasoma. Prince Sutasoma was a Bodhisattva, and Saudasa beseeched teachings from him.

[Note: Saudasa was half human, half beast, and a cannibal. Once, he captured the Prince and was going to cook the Prince for a meal. The conversation between them changed Saudasa's mind, he turned around and asked the Prince to teach him.]

Thereupon, the bodhisattva prince, knowing Saudasa's state of mind – that is, knowing that Saudasa had become suitable for hearing the teachings – gave him the teachings.

[12B, 04.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 127 L12]

Know that Saudasa, well, had become qualified! How was he qualified? It was mentioned earlier – we must eliminate “three faults of a vessel and rely on the six ideas.” So Buddha always specifically stated in Mahayana sutras, “Listen well! Listen well! Properly reflect on it.” [You] must listen well, earnestly listen, and listen through and through! [Buddha] repeatedly instructed with the double “Listen well! Listen well!” without being nonchalant or careless. What should be done after hearing? These words contain all the necessary applications. “Thoroughly contemplate and keep it in mind!” “Thoroughly” means being skillful in decision making – to contemplate and, once contemplated, wholeheartedly remember it. This mindfulness follows contemplation and, once mindfulness is in place, then concentration and wisdom will ensue. And then the effect of concentration and wisdom will arise. With the aforementioned preparation, then he [the teacher] will carry on with the next teachings. Thus, you will naturally accord with it, so this is about how to explain it. Here, [this chapter] is about hearing. The reason we are unable to receive benefits now, the flaws have been pointed out earlier very clearly and explicitly. I am very delighted that I have this opportunity to understand how to advance profoundly, to identify the flaws. So today, from here on, together we can all explore this in depth.

In brief, develop the spirit of enlightenment, thinking:

For the sake of all living beings, I will attain

Buddhahood.

[12B, 05.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 128

L9]

In brief, to sum it all up, what is the main framework for us to initiate sincere aspiration? I, for the sake of all living beings, must attain Buddhahood in order to benefit all beings.

[12B, 05.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 128 L12]
In order to attain this, I must train in its causes;

You want to become a Buddha, Buddhahood is the effect, and so what would the required seed be? What should be done at the causal stage?

[12B, 06.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 129 L1]
for this, I must know those causes.

You must know the causes first, and then apply accordingly.

[12B, 06.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 129 L3]
For this, it is evident that I must hear the teachings.

In order to know [the causes], hearing the teach

[12B, 06.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 129 L5]
Therefore, I will listen to the teachings.

Listen to the teachings and the systematic application will be applied accordingly.

[12B, 06.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 129 L7]
Remember the benefits of hearing. Eliminate the faults of a vessel, and so forth, and listen with great delight.

Going through the process of hearing, [the author] started with the benefits of hearing, and, with this, the attitude of great delight is then gradually initiated. “Great delight” is joyous perseverance – so it is called “aspiration relies on faith, diligence relies on aspiration.” (信為欲依, 欲為勤依) Once you hear clearly, then you generate faith, wow! Feeling this is truly what inspires you. Moreover, the aspiration will be closely followed by diligent engagement – acts of joyous

perseverance. And then, listen with intention to abide by it. What to abide by was described as the first step of preparation; that is, “eliminate the three faults of a vessel and rely on the six ideas.” Really listen in this way; this is the reasoning behind hearing [the teachings].

[12B, 07.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P130 L1]
B. How to explain a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great

How to explain a teaching: well then, how to explain? What should be included in the explanation? Usually in Mahayana teachings, there are two approaches: one approach is to follow those best at explaining, and another is to teach after you have achieved perfect attainment. Buddha applied both at the same time; [he] worked on both at once. Even though your ultimate purpose of teaching is to help others, the end result is certainly to teach others. Learning as you are teaching has two reasons: one is personal fulfillment, also known as learning from the teaching experience. While teaching others at same time, you will receive more benefit than others; this is the first reason. Second, since we are applying the perfect Mahayana Buddha path, [you] will more or less explain it within your capacity. This is to plant a seed at the causal stage; that is how it works. However, be aware of the differences – you should realize at what point you are able to teach, and, at that point, gradually deepen the level of your instruction, this must be understood.

[12B, 08.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 130 L10]

So here, it is saying that even though we are taking the beginning steps, we should more or less know how [to explain the teachings to others]. However, with this understanding, be

cautious! Do not do the following: as a beginner – prior to being fully qualified – take the qualification in the text as the high standard to measure others, and that is completely wrong. Always remember, Buddha Dharma is for personal purification. The qualification to explain should be applied to ourselves prior to giving instructions – well, am I qualified? If not, then stop for a while, my ability to teach is at this minimum qualification. It is not as though I read this in the book and immediately repeat it to others; this would make us like a record player. People describe how parrots learn to talk, talking parrots; at least the parrot has a mind, whereas the disc is like a piece of wood. We are indeed like a piece of wood. Come to think of it, by doing this [being like a disc], then it would be a loss for both self and others. Therefore, what is the proper way of explaining? It is divided into several parts:

There are four parts to the explanation:

- 1. Contemplating the benefits of explaining the teaching**
- 2. Developing reverence for the Teacher and the teaching**
- 3. With what sort of thoughts and behavior you should explain the teaching**
- 4. Differentiating between those to whom you should and should not explain the teaching**

[12B, 09.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 131 L6]

First, “contemplating the benefit of explaining the teaching” – explaining that the teaching has sublime benefits, which are extremely great. Second, “developing reverence for the Teacher and the teaching.” Before teaching, [we] should develop reverence – “teacher” is the Buddha – toward Buddha

and Dharma. Before the teaching, well, what about the actual explanation of the teaching? “With what sort of thoughts,” what should the mentality be? Giving teachings is performing the actual deed, the thoughts are in the mind, and “behavior” is how the action should be conducted. “Differentiating between those to whom you should and should not explain the teaching,” to the audience, under what circumstance [one] should or should not explain, how should this be differentiated? Now, here are the four sections, [we] will briefly go over them:

**1. Contemplating the benefits of explaining the teaching
It is very beneficial to impart the teachings without
concern for worldly things - profit, honor, fame, and the
like.**

[12B, 10.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 131 L12]

The benefits from imparting the teachings are extraordinarily great, but what must be required? Well, in spite of these [worldly things]. If your concern is profit, honor, fame, or the like, then these afflictions are considered contaminated – teaching with impure motivation, this should be avoided, don’t do it this way! However, this is easier said than done. What is truly important is that we should use this teaching to examine ourselves within. If you do not examine [yourself], the recognition will not arise. Without introspection [you] will not recognize [the contamination]. We always think: alas, I am a Dharma master and [I] have to salvage others. Actually ... the intention is good. But the real issue is the mental intent – unable to distinguish contamination from purification, cannot tell them apart. Once you can distinguish between them, then it is evident and clear. When a thought arises in the mind, you

would recognize, well, identify which one is most important. By then, if you are able to practice accordingly, the merits will be sublime, extraordinary merits, and inconceivably auspiciousness!

[12B, 11.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 132 L8]

For, as the *Exhortation to Wholehearted Resolve* says: Maitreya, there are twenty benefits of the generosity with which you give a gift of the teaching without concern for material things, profit, or honor.

Ajita is also known as Maitreya. Here, Buddha told us that Maitreya said this “teaching without concern” is pure Dharma giving – giving teaching without tainted intention. In other words, [teaching] without any contamination. Often we tend to explain the teaching with an impure attitude, to teach with contamination, the mind is impure – attached to the aforementioned [worldly expectations] when teaching. Also there is another flaw, when you are with expectation; you will distort the Buddha Dharma. For example, today for the sake of certain object, so [you] praise generosity. When you need something you will praise that item. Unknowingly you formed [the habit]; this is pretty bad, very bad, really awful, and very dreadful! So this point requires special attention, what is pure Dharma giving; that is, all [the worldly expectations] are not needed. Here are twenty notable benefits. It lists the benefits below:

[12B, 12.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 133 L3]

What are the twenty? They are as follows. You will come to have (1) recollection; (2) intelligence; 3)

understanding; (4) stability; (5) wisdom; (6) supramundane wisdom; (7) little desire; (8) little hatred; and (9) little ignorance. Also (10) demons

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will not find an opportunity to harm you;

Demons are evil spirits in general, including the demon king.

(11) the *bhagavan* buddhas will think of you as a precious, only child; (12) nonhumans will guard you; (13) deities will bestow charisma and power on you; (14) enemies will find no opportunity to harm you; (15) friends will remain steadfast; (16) your words will be trusted; (17) you will attain fearlessness; (18) you will have abundant happiness; (19) you will be praised by the wise; and (20) your gift of the teaching will be worthy of remembrance.

The last part, “your gift of the teaching will be worthy of remembrance,” means the ability to offer Dharma teachings. These twenty benefits will not be discussed further.

Develop belief in the benefits of explaining the teachings from the depths of your heart as they are set forth in many collections of sutra.

[12B, 12.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 133 L6]

Other than these twenty, many Sutras have frequently mentioned the extraordinary benefits of explaining the teaching. Regarding this, we should develop a sincere and laudable aspiration to study as well.

[12B, 13.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 133 L11]

With regard to the fourth benefit above, “you will come to have stability,” it is translated in the new translation of Santideva’s *Compendium of Trainings (Siksa-samuccaya)* as, “you will come to have belief,” and in some old translations as, “you will come to have diligence.”

[12B, 13.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 134 L2]

The aforementioned “stability” was an older translation. These twenty are the extraordinary benefits of explaining the teachings. Regarding this, we should strive with our best abilities to start from hearing and then, upon having some understanding, and then these [twenty benefits] will gradually and gradually developed. This development will be very advantageous for us.

[12B, 14.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 134 L6]

2. Developing reverence for the Teacher [Sakyamuni Buddha] and the teaching

How should we develop reverence and offer to Buddha and Dharma?

[12B, 14.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 134L 8]

When the Bhagavan [Buddha] set forth the Mother of Conquerors [the *Prajnaparamita*], he performed such acts of respect as arranging the throne himself

When Buddha taught Prajna [Perfection of Wisdom], he personally prepared the teaching throne. Why? He paid respect to the teachings! Therefore,

[12B, 14.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 134 L10]

Likewise, since the teachings are respected even by buddhas, when you explain the teachings, be very respectful of the teachings and the Teacher [Sakyamuni Buddha] as well, remembering his good qualities and kindness.

[We] should know that “the teaching” is the mother of Buddha. All Buddhas are without exception, they are all produced by the Dharma – listening to the teachings and then practicing Buddha Dharma accordingly, [Buddhas] were born from [applying] the teachings. Thus, for us now, we should pay the utmost respect to the teaching. This is the reason - the reasoning is right here. For those giving teachings, their qualifications may vary, but the teaching is instructed by all Buddhas, the Dharma is all Buddhas’ instruction, this we have to distinguish clearly. From the perspective of the teaching, in order to accord to all of it, there are variations – from Mahayana to Hinayana, which include sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas – from Maha to Hina. Then the difference between Sutrayana and Tantrayana, and the difference between profound-view and extensive-deeds – they are all for the sake of accommodating various capacities. The ultimate perfection state is all the same. Each of these has its particular adaptability; we should never randomly criticize. If the tendency is there, then you should be careful. It is obvious that our level of wisdom is shallow, thus [we are] unable to fathom why Buddha arranged the teachings this way. Once the understanding is there, and then random criticism will not happen this is to your advantage. Otherwise, we would be apt to criticize at every turn “this is Mahayana, this is Hinayana...” It is not advised for Mahayana to slander Hinayana, yet there are many Hinayana practitioners slandering Mahayana that is even more absurd!

[12B, 16.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 135 L8]

Therefore, last time, I shared a particular story with everyone. There was this Vimalamitra, he was such a great achiever in all of India. But, just because [he] slandered Bodhisattva Vasubandhu and Mahayana teaching, he immediately descended to the Avici [unrelenting] Hell! It was this serious. Hence, heed this obstacle of slandering the teaching! Whenever we have this idea in mind: “Well, I am a Zen practitioner, he chants Buddha’s name, which is for old men and old women.” Then you should immediately be aware, “[I have] wronged! Wronged! This is the contamination in my mind.” By the same token, it is the same with your chanting of Buddha’s name – never slander anyone! You can only say, “Well, I do not have enough ability now so this is only what I can apply; when I become capable, I will learn that, too.” Then you are right, this is right. Therefore, this reverence is most important, if you can be respectful, then there will be benefit. Hence, you pay great respect to the teachings! Great reverence! And be mindful of Buddha’s good qualities and kindness. Just by being mindful of these, that is great reverence. To us, the merit of being mindful of the good qualities of the three Jewels has an incredible effect, peerless effect. Later when [we] discuss taking refuge, this will be mentioned. Thus, I will not explore in further detail.

[12B, 17.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 136 L3]

We usually talk about taking the three refuges, the three Jewels. While truly taking the three refuges and be mindful of them, your mind will be aligned with them. At that time, your heart will be filled with incredible joy. This is the immeasurable merit. Therefore, taking refuge truly has immeasurable blissful

merit, yet you need to know how to take refuge, how your mind functions. By then, regardless of what you are engaged in – sitting here listening – no matter what you are listening to, your mind will resonate to it with joy. Even sleeping is the same. Whatever [teaching] you are engaged in, the feeling of: “ah, I am adapting to the teaching.” With this attitude toward the teaching, this joyfulness and merit will readily deliver you to Pure Land, such greatness! Therefore, we should be skillful in practicing. Chanting Buddha’s name is very easy. Even if you are not inspired to be reborn to Pure Land, the same applies to the other [aspirations] – your attainment arises from this application. Thus, it is absolutely true that all conventional and ultimate good qualities arise from [relying on] the three Jewels.

[12B, 18.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 136 L12]

3. With what sort of thoughts and behavior you should explain the teaching

As for the teaching, what should our attitude be when explaining? The attitude, which means mental state, and performance are physical and verbal activities.

[12B, 18.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 136 L14]

With regard to your thoughts, develop the five ideas set forth in the *Questions of Sagaramati Sutra*

In our thoughts, we should possess the five ideas. In hearing the teaching, there are six ideas. The first of the six ideas is considering yourself as a sick person. Now, explaining the teaching to others the [speaker] is the doctor, instead of the thought of being sick. This is for the doctor to heal others’ illnesses.

[12B, 18.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 137 L3]
- think of yourself as a doctor,

This is the first idea, [consider] oneself as the doctor. Because I am the doctor, so prior to starting the doctor's work, first ask yourself: "am I a quack or truly endowed with the ability to cure others?" This is the first important task. And then,

[12B, 19.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 137 L6]
the teachings as medicine,

If I am truly a doctor, then the prescription should cure others. Otherwise, the prescription will not necessarily help. This is very important. Therefore, true Buddha Dharma should liberate others – Dharma is the medicine.

[12B, 19.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 137 L10]
those listening to the teachings as sick persons, and the *tathagatas* as excellent beings, and wish that the teachings remain for a long time.

These are the same [as the six ideas].

[12B, 19.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 137 L12]
Cultivate love for those who have gathered to listen.

Other than this, [the attitude] toward the disciples, who are listening and learning,

[12B, 19.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 138 L2]

Why are you explaining [the teaching] to [the listeners]? It is not for honor, fame, or profit, not for these. It is for the purpose of rescuing him with compassionate love. Due to your endowment of this quality, so you are able to.

[12B, 19.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 138 L5]

Give up jealousy that fears the superiority of others; the laziness of procrastination; the dispiritedness of being tired due to explaining something again and again;

Do not argue with others – ah, I am right and he is wrong – or hold a grudge against others. When others are wrong, spiting them – none of this. This worldly expression is often used, “scholars have disparaged each other since ancient times.” (文人相輕, 自古皆然) Or we may say: “from time immemorial, scholars have mocked each other.” (自古文人相輕) This is the worldly sign. Buddha Dharma is not like that. Praise each other, the reason is right here. Once you truly align with it, this [attitude] will naturally happen. Otherwise, if we are not in concordance, then, by the same token, we will spite others and feel that I am better off. This [wrong attitude] will harm and hinder us. And then, by the same token, [we are] still procrastinating with laxity - alas taking it easy with slacking attitude - none of this will happen. On the contrary, [you] will not be dispirited in explaining the teaching over and over again. Also,

[12B, 20.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 138 L12] praising yourself and listing the faults of others;

All this can be avoided: praising the self and listing others' faults. We should know this.

[12B, 20.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 139 L1] stinginess with regard to explaining the teaching; and concern for material things such as food and clothing.

These are all eliminated; eliminate all of these.

[12B, 20.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 139 L3]

Then think, “Just this merit from teaching in order that others and I attain buddhahood is a favorable condition for my happiness.”

So are we truly expecting nothing? Yes, it can also be said that there may or may not be an expectation. What does this mean? Let’s put it this way, “Why am I doing this? It is simply for the sake of achieving Buddhahood for self and others.” This is, to some extent, having anticipation. Whereas the true state of Buddhahood is not about gaining - so it is known as not having anticipation. Between having and not having anticipation, we should not judge by using our present perception. Our perception is not quite accurate yet. How to have the [proper] expectation and what is not to be expected; and we often make mistakes and become infatuated. We should earnestly continue to study. As for the anticipation, there is a strict definition for it, and this strict definition is referring to the sign of our mental concordance. At that time, abide by the recognized characteristics accordingly, and then [you] are on the right track.

[12B, 22.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 139 L11]

Because of the merit of explaining the teaching – our explaining the teachings are certainly meritorious – this provides us with favorable conditions for happiness; instead of the honor, fame, or profit presented to us - this is our highest goal. So [we] often say: “Well, I need to expect nothing.” For us ordinary beings to have no gain is very difficult! Thus, upon acquiring a speck of instruction, now [I] really feel delighted, and this is with anticipation! Anticipate what? Anticipate that [mentality of attaining Buddhahood]; because of my pursuit of this and setting a high goal here, petty fame, honor, and profit will not be in [my] way. This is absolutely true from my

personal experience. Often, when you are told to forsake something, it is very difficult. Thus, Venerable Yin-guang (印光大師) specifically said: “For the old farmer in the countryside, you tell him to just cultivate and don’t worry about harvest.” So, after days of hard work, you are not concerned about rewards, could that be possible? We are all ordinary beings, just like the old farmer in the countryside. You say, “Well! Now you are without expectation, you don’t need to worry. Just apply the teaching.” This is really difficult and it is impossible to ask you to forsake fame, honor, and profit. Whereas now it is not so – you are asked to forsake petty fame and profit, and set for great fame and profit, just like that. Thus, the advantages are revealed here, so, naturally, you will forsake [the petty aspirations].

[12B, 23.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 140 L8]

Thus the karmic stories that Venerable Yin-guang (印光大師) taught us in the beginning make great sense. For example, in this place, the teaching was always taught in this manner. Our elder abbot was always...I admire and praise him so. At first, [the elder abbot] taught *Ksitigarbha Sutra*, and, in the *Precepts for Novice Monks* (沙彌律儀), there were many stories about cause and effect. No lectures in the beginning, just telling you: “Well! You abide by this, forsake the petty fame and profit for now, bigger and better profit will arise.” To earnestly study Buddha Dharma, just bigger and better is not enough, it needs to be even higher than that, higher to a peerless level. Especially with this grand purpose of yours, this grand purpose must be very specific and tangible! By

then, it will be very easy to apply the [teaching] to replace [the petty goals] you have now. Be encouraged by this aspiration for virtue (善法欲), especially since the Mahayana does not teach us to eliminate but to purify – to transform this desire into pursuing unsurpassed enlightenment, the unsurpassed aspiration for virtue, and to cultivate great joyous perseverance. Ah, this is of great power, truly great!

[12B, 24.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 141 L1]

So here is an example. For instance, in our country, the slopes of the hills here are very steep, alas, every year after the typhoon it is terrible! Wow, the falling landslides washing away good soil. Don't underestimate the soil it is a valuable asset. Whether there are diamonds and the like, it does not matter. If we were to lose all the topsoil, there would only be desert left in the future. Then we would not be able to survive, that is a fact. Ah, now some [engineers] have a very skillful method, what should be done? Grow a forest above and build a dam. By doing this, the engineers skillfully irrigated the rainwater through the forest and the topsoil is protected, and then the dam captured the water. Thus, [they] converted what was originally harmful to generate powerful electricity.

[12B, 25.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 141 L8]

Now the attachment in our minds is the same, you do not eliminate or sever it right away. You skillfully transform it from what was originally very harmful into something very beneficial – this is truly Buddha Dharma. So the teaching tells us in every aspect “to transform afflictions into enlightenment, and convert flaws into merits.” In the end, “affliction is enlightenment,” and there is no need for you to transform it because it was enlightenment to begin with – the

transformation is due to being in the midst of confusion and ignorance. This is great, how nice! Thus, [great teachers] told us, “Well! [If] you have to have desire, desire this [aspiration for virtue].” The only fear is that you lack this attachment [of virtue]. However, [great teachers] do not use [the word] desire - because by using it our existing latent propensity will unknowingly arise - but in different terms: aspiration for virtue, to replace this desire.

[12B, 25.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 141 L14]
With regard to your behavior,

The above speaks of the attitude. What about performance, how should we behave?

[12B, 26.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 142 L2]
wash and make yourself clean. Then, after putting on unsoiled clothing, sit upon a teaching seat and cushion in a place that is clean and attractive.
English LR v.1 p.65

This is the way [we should behave]: first [we] need to purify physically and verbally. Not just internally, but also the outer clothes. Not just physically, but also our teaching environment, doing this gradually. Since our monastic vows have various restrictions, no singing, dancing, etc., but we are encouraged to praise Buddha, praising Buddha is allowed. So we often say that, as the monastics, [we] cannot interfere with the village of spiritual entities and deities, and area of grass and trees, but there is an exception with maintaining the monastery. It is allowed to adorn the monastery! In that case, such is the attitude. So for us to absolutely respect Dharma, we should behave according to this. Further, it says:

[12B, 26.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 142 L9]

It is said in the *Questions of Sagaramati Sutra* that if you recite the mantra for overcoming demons, then demons and deities of the demon class within a radius of one hundred leagues will not come. Even if they do come, they will be unable to cause difficulties. Therefore, recite that mantra.

During the actual session, begin with chanting the mantra. For instance, we are reciting the *Diamond Sutra*. Before that, the preparatory rite is always something like the *Settling the Earth Mantra* (安土地真言), to settle something, and then eradicate disaster, eight vajras, etc. Purify verbal karma and purify physical karma, they all have their absolute great merits and great reasoning. Due to our current teachings being fragmented, the set of rites are incomplete, compared to when they existed in India [during the Buddha's time]. If you can do this, then in "a hundred leagues," this term "league" is often equivalent to forty, sixty, or eighty kilometers. It is a measure of distance for the universal monarch to roam, and their differences are great, medium, and small.

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[13A, 00.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 147 L1]

[If they were] within one hundred leagues, the demons of the demon realm would not come. Even if they were to come, they would not be able to cause any difficulties. This is why we need to recite the mantra. Then, next

[13A, 00.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 147 L3]

Then, with a radiant face, teach, using examples, reasons, and scriptural citations and other accessories for ascertaining the meaning.

During the actual teaching, [we] need to ascertain the reasoning. Now, what is the actual content of our teaching, this is very important, it is crucial. This point was clearly explained at the beginning of the *Biography of Venerable Atisha*. What does Buddha Dharma rely on to exist? It relies on whether there is Dharma in this world. This Dharma is the tenet that delivers the true intent of the teachings and relies on the teachers of the lineage and the [purity of the] lineage. We must never just rely on personal intellectual wits – that is personal feeling of this or that. If this is what we are doing, then the flaws will arise – although the teaching is everywhere, applying it is a different matter, and this is where the issue lies. Even though, for example, “Dharma characteristic” was originally the best guidance for practice, because you have not obtained true understanding, you turn to memorizing the terminology with great distress, this is different [from proper application of the guidance]. This is what we have to ensure before giving explanations [of the teachings].

[13A, 01.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 148 L3]

Once you are certain of this, it doesn't matter even when your expression is not eloquent. As mentioned earlier, you should not feel, “Well! The teacher speaks harshly or unpleasantly.” As long as he points out the logic and truly abides by proper reasoning, then it is fine. Moreover, even when the logical reasoning is correct, the qualifications of “reasons, examples, scriptural citations” are still required. This

well-reasoned logic is very clear, the rationale is very clear. Various examples are also required, for Buddha Dharma is very profound. You need to use examples that are easily understood to allow the learner to comprehend the necessary relationships from beginning to end. Then, apply this reasoning to deliver this sublime teaching and quote from sublime sources to explain. This is the way to teach. Next, it refers to a sutra.

[13A, 02.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 148 L9]

The Lotus Sutra says:

**The learned always give without jealousy
Sweet-sounding teachings with manifold meanings.
Having thoroughly cast aside laziness as well,
They are not dispirited to repeat teachings again and again.**

**The learned give up all that is repugnant
And cultivate the power of love toward those around them.**

**Day and night they cultivate the supreme teachings.
Using millions of examples, the learned
Bring joy and delight to those listening to their teachings.**

**They never have the slightest desire for worldly gain:
Not thinking of sustenance – hard or soft foods, or drink,**

**Of clothing, or bedding, or religious robes,
Or even of medicine to cure an illness –**

They ask nothing at all from those listening to their teachings.

**Rather, the learned always think, “May I myself
And all living beings achieve Buddhahood,” and,
“Whatever teaching I impart in order to help the world**

Is a completely favorable condition for my happiness.”

This is from [the middle of chapter 14] of *The Lotus Sutra*, which talks about the Bodhisattva’s teaching of Dharma during a degenerate time. It describes the four blissful deeds to promulgate Mahayana scriptures. However, as this Sutra was spread from India to Tibet and back [to China], the translation has produced slightly different wording but the content remains the same. A person with true wisdom – this wisdom is not worldly wisdom or intellectual wits – is one who is endowed with proper perception of Buddha Dharma wisdom without any flaws. And then the content in “manifold meanings” must be perfect. “Sweet-sounding” refers to what is spoken: harmonious and pleasant. “Having thoroughly cast aside laziness as well” refers to not becoming dispirited. All that is repugnant in the “give up all that is repugnant” refers to what is not resonating to [the teaching], and all of these [must be perfected]. Also, there must be “the power of love and compassion” toward those who have come to listen. These are the most important and primary qualifications for us to explain the teachings. If [the instructors] do not have the power of love and compassion, we would think: [the instructors] are not seeking fame or profit and without any expectation after all this talk, what for? All this effort has exhausted [the instructor] to death! Well, the compassion [of the instructor] is to benefit [the listeners]! Just like parents, without exception, devote their entire effort to their children, why? The cause is this [compassion]. Thus, in cultivating the power of love and compassion in the seven causes and effects [v.2 p.38], the first one is to regard all sentient beings as parents – this is the reason. As we want to liberate all

sentient beings, the explanation of the teachings needs to have this mentality. It is extraordinarily excellent if we earnestly teach and act on “day and night they cultivate the supreme teachings.”

[13A, 05.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 149 L12]

“Using millions of examples” for kotis and ayutam are units of measurement used in India – huge numbers, all sorts of examples applied to please all sentient beings. This is our purpose of explaining the teaching instead of catering to worldly desires, not like that. What should be ignored? Regardless of food, clothing, or bedding, etc., “they ask nothing at all from those listening to their teachings,” this is the attitude. Then what is truly required? “The learned always think: May I and all living beings achieve Buddhahood.” The only goal is to achieve Buddhahood for self and others. For the sake of this goal, to truly benefit the world, the teaching must be imparted. Explaining the teaching in this way is how we rely on “happiness.” Thus, it is called “blissful deeds.” This indeed is our blissful action. The last one is who we should and should not impart Dharma to. Below, it says...

English LR v.1 p.65

[13A, 06.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 150 L4]

4. Differentiating between those to whom you should and should not explain the teaching

Who should we teach? Who we should not teach?

[13A, 06.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 150 L7]

Do not explain the teachings without being requested to do so; as Gunaprabha’s *Sutra on the Discipline (Vinaya-sutra)* says, “It should not be done without request.”

It is stated in the *Sutra on the Discipline* that Buddha Dharma must be requested, Buddha's teachings must be invited, this point is very important to us. If the teaching were delivered to [our] door today but [we] were unwilling to accept it – this is indeed a very intriguing and interesting situation. This point applies to all of us, for those who really want to learn should pay attention to it! If [you] constantly harbor the feeling of having been mistreated, actually it is harming yourself and injurious to yourself. Later, if the opportunity arises, [we] definitely would have to cleanse and purify this.

[13A, 07.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 150 L12]
It should not be done without request.

If there is no request, don't teach. We may say "Well, aren't you [supposed to be] compassionate?" This is wrong, it is not so! We lack the understanding of the true characteristic of compassion. Too often, we are too lax in skillful means, which leads to downfall. It is clear that mothers in this world are the most compassionate, but it is difficult for a mother to discipline her children, the spoiled ones are all indulged, isn't this very clear? For instance, in our Chinese history, Venerable Dao-xuan, the patriarch of precepts, was mentioned as one example yesterday. Well, from our worldly view, his Master was truly unreasonable - he absolutely refused to take in this disciple. No matter how much [the disciple] begged, [the Master] ignored him. Eventually, [Venerable Dao-xuan] became a great being of his time, such is the story!

[13A, 07.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 151 L6]

In our [Chinese] Zen lineage there was the "The Lion of He-xi" story, which is similar [to the story of Venerable Dao-xuan]. There were three monks who arranged to pay their respects to Zen Master Zhao-qing of Fen-yang [name of the place], so

they traveled from the south. This He-xi was the west of He-tao [the Great Bend of the Yellow River in Inner Mongolia], which is near the present Shan-xi [province] area. That area is extremely cold! To travel from the south was full of hardship; a land covered with ice and snow, those were the conditions. It was not like what we have now, very simple! Take a flight and then ride in a car, just like that! Even if there may not be cars or charter buses, there may be public transportation. Back then, these were not available, so they relied on their two legs to walk. On top of that, [they] had to do their alms rounds! By the time they arrived [at the monastery of Zen Master Zhao-qing], it was well into the night. [When the Zen Master] took a look, “These three spirits of grievance!” Slam! The door was shut and they were left outside. If it were for us, [we] would say: “Ah! This great virtuous teacher, [we] came all the way here to rely on him, how cruel is this!” There is no doubt that we would definitely condemn him! Those three [monks] said, “Alright, well, since [we] are already here, then that is fine, [we] will stay here for a night to rest well. [We] will discuss it tomorrow.”

[13A, 08.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 151 L14]

The next day, the Zen Master opened the window and found that the three “spirits of grievance” were still there! Using the basin of cold water he had just used to wash his face, “Splash!” All of a sudden, he dumped it on the three. As a result, two out of the three could not handle it and they both left. The third one stayed to endure [this treatment]. [When the Zen Master] saw that this “spirit of grievance” was still around – “very well, since he did not leave, let him in.” This started a relationship between master and disciple that lasted for years. Sometimes, after being busy for most of the day [the disciple]

would go to the teacher, and the Master would give him a good excoriation. [The disciple] put in a few years of hard work! Finally, “The Lion of He-xi” – the great virtuous teacher of that time – was created.

[13A,09.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 152 L4]

So, these days, we lack true understanding of Buddha Dharma. I encourage you all to read *The Biography of Venerable Milarepa*. This is definitely not about Tantric Buddhism. The main thing is to learn from the section relevant to the current topic – how he went through strict training to become such a talented being. However, for now, after reading it, we should not jump to begin yet. We have to make sure that we thoroughly understand the content of the teaching. By that time, you will know: oh, [this is] why! Why the lengthy training can produce steel-like qualities. There is no exception in this world, absolutely no exception at all. You must endure such training to transform. Otherwise, how can one attain achievement? This we should understand. May I ask, what is in our mental streams now? What? Think it over; I believe we all can understand! What is in there? It contains two things*. This is speaking from my own experience, for years I have had this flaw that [I am] still repenting. I constantly strive on it: the tendency of being attached to comfort¹, afflictive view and afflictive sentiment². All the teachers of the lineage are pointing out this same tendency to us – [we are having] hard time abandon them. Not only [are we] unable to let go, but [we] also protect them with all sorts of excuses, all sorts of reasoning.

**[*1. The tendency of being attached to comfort
2. Afflictive view and afflictive sentiment]**

[13A, 10.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P152 L13]

I remember when I was first ordained over twenty years ago. I lived at Lionhead Mountain. There, I stayed with my Master in a little thatched hut, and really appreciated the respect from those laypeople that lived in front [of the hut]. As a newly ordained monk, I was very stubborn – too stubborn. Now, when I think of it, it was very terrible. Wow, I would pick up my Master’s tattered and torn robes to wear them and felt good about it. I refused to wear good robes. Now I am just beginning to understand – abiding by the arising conditions – when there are no good robes, then wear the torn ones; if good robes are available then wear them. During that time, I thought that torn robes were the only choice; eating food was the same way. I thought that being a practitioner was just this way. Later, someone advised [me], they said that physical well-being was very important – to utilize this impermanent form to attain wisdom of emptiness – this was the advice! Well, I debated with them, objecting, “Utilize impermanence to attain wisdom of emptiness, actually, we have mistaken impermanence as true nature!” It seemed clear and logical. Not until a few years later, when I reflected on it, was I really as good as what I said? Not so, alas, not at all! That time, although I talked about reasoning, what was I saying? Afflictive-view and [it was] very serious, too serious! Often, our attitude is like such, the first obstacle is right here.

[13A, 11.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 153 L8]

So this is why the teaching needs to be requested, this is the reason. Nagarjuna Bodhisattva told us this in the very beginning. Even from my own experience, the benefits I have received are similar – this benefit is for the requester. I will relate one story: once, I heard from my teacher who said that one of his teachers – this teacher [of his] was very remarkable

– was coming. There were indeed many indications in advance, at that time I already wholeheartedly admired and respected this great teacher. I can hardly express this mentality, but, if you try sincerely, you will all experience it. For many years before that, I was continuously expecting, constantly mindful of [meeting this great teacher], ah! When prostrating, this is what I prayed for. On that meeting day, before leaving, I bathed, shaved, and presented my offering; I did all this by myself without letting others know. While on the way, every step – I can still recall that time – when they touched the ground, my feet felt like they had special strength. This feeling was so real, when you are mindful; the entire situation is totally different. It was not the feeling of lightness – regardless of whether the feeling was there or not. The feeling was totally different. Then, [I] sat there mindfully focused.

[13A, 13.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 154 L4]

Well, there were many people there! I sat there and the talk began. The content of the speech was extremely simple; very, very simple! Just such simplicity, he said: “Nowadays, the world is filled with afflictions, actually we don’t have proper recognition of our object.” That was the general content! “And, [we] often blame others. This attitude is not right; the actual key is within the self. As long as you remove the fence you have built within your mind, then it should be right!” He gave an example: “When you meet somebody, [you] always feel that the other person should smile at you first and bow to you, then you will smile back. Why don’t you smile at him first? As simple as this! You apply your preferred treatment toward him. By doing it right, naturally, the effective response will be positive.” Just this simple!

[13A,14.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 154 L11]

I am only talking about the content! Well, it was wonderful! The first time I had ever experienced accordance with the teaching, it was just this feeling: all of a sudden, my entire being was filled with, ah; it is hard for me to describe! It is really hard to express, it was like my entire being was immersed in something. My entire being was filled with this kind of joy; I cannot depict it clearly, extremely delightful! This mind state lasted for a few days, remained for a few days. In retrospect, I truly realized that the mind state described in the Sutras was not merely reasoning – it could be experienced. Whatever I saw, I could sense the profound intention in the Sutra. This sensation appeared everywhere – ah, so that was how it works! This [realization] was considered a simple one, it did not represent any attainment; I do have many similar experiences. Later, I realized the wonder of paying respect with mindful sincerity. No wonder that elder monk behaved like this when the others played pranks on him, to say nothing of a genuine, qualified Dharma instructor. So the key lies here. Due to obtaining this type of benefit, I often pray [for the yearning of the teaching].

[13A,15.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P155 L5]

Once, I met with one of my teachers and he asked, “How are you? How is life here?” Life was hard over there, they knew that too. I was advanced in age and poor in health. I used to live in America, in a very comfortable environment. Then, I went to this place and life was very hard. When I got up in the morning, breakfast was a cup of tea and a big biscuit. For lunch, it was just a steamed bun and a plate of vegetables. The vegetables were simply cooked! Today was potato, tomorrow was eggplant, and the day after was cabbage – all cooked with a little salt and oil, always like that, rotating between these options. In the evening, dinner was

plain rice and soup with just a little salt. That was all, just like this. Sometimes, a classmate might bring in some rock salt, much to everybody's delight. Everybody fought to have some. You can imagine the simplicity of life there. But nobody complained.

[13A, 16.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 155L13]

So this teacher of mine came to ask me, he said: how are you? Some people there, well, they told the teacher to ask me to buy more nutritional supplements. I did not want to, because I was very pleased to be there. Since he asked, I replied, "Over here, there are all kinds of happiness and satisfaction, except for one thing." He said, "What is it?" I replied, "To be blessed by the teacher." Upon hearing this, he stared at me, "Blessing? You have to bless yourself, does this need to be bestowed?" Just this one statement! Right then, it was like a stick had hit me, I was feeling pretty good about it! I was telling the truth. Afterwards, I thought about it and totally agreed. You have to bless yourself – by relying on what? Three words: focus, sincerity, and pure faith; remember these well! So, at the very least for us now: "do not explain the teachings when they are not requested."

[13A, 17.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 156 L5]

Even when requested, it is necessary to investigate to see whether or not the potential student is suitable to receive the teachings.

Even if [the teachings are] requested, it is necessary to see if the student is a suitable vessel! Especially for those who might be highly suitable do not impart teaching to him even if [the student] requests it. Make it difficult for him and this is the reason. On the other hand,

[13A, 17.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 156 L8]

And even when not requested, it is appropriate to explain the teachings to someone only if you know them to be a suitable recipient.

[13A,19.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 157 L3]

Concerning this, *the King of Concentrations Sutra* says:

**Should someone request you
To bestow the teachings, first say,
“I am not trained extensively.”
Then say, “You are knowledgeable and wise.
How can I explain the teachings
To one as great as you?”**

English LR v.1 p.66

**Do not impart the teachings casually,
But only after you have investigated whether the
listener is a suitable recipient.
If you know the listener is a suitable recipient,
Explain the teachings even without a request.**

Thus, [the author] follows this by quoting from a Sutra for explanation. If you are here for the sake of giving the teaching, then you should address the requester [prior to the teaching]: “Alas, I am...” Be modest and say, “My knowledge is limited, and you are such a skillful practitioner! In the presence of such a great Bodhisattva like you, how can I give teachings?” As the instructor, this should be addressed first, instead of hastily starting the teaching. First, observe if the other party is a suitable vessel for the teaching. If it is recognized that he is a vessel, then teach even if it was not requested.

**[13A, 20.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 157
L10]**

Here, I will tell a story. Now, you all have the book of the *Biography of Lama Tsong-kha-pa*. This Lama Tsong-kha-pa had two primary disciples, senior disciples. You can turn to the book, some have the book with them, some do not; those who did not bring the book, go home and read it. On the cover there is a picture, there are two people on the bottom of the picture. These two are Lama Tsong-kha-pa's primary disciples. Tsong-kha-pa's entire lineage was passed down to them, in this way. One of the disciples is called Gyeltsabje and the other is Kaydrubje. This Gyeltsabje was the disciple who would transmit the complete set of the Great Master's teachings. Kaydrubje was the upholder of Tsong-kha-pa's teachings in their totality. Both of them offered extraordinary contributions to Lama Tsong-kha-pa's teachings.

There is a story about first time Gyeltsabje went to meet with Lama Tsong-kha-pa. Gyeltsabje was a renowned scholar somewhere in Tibet, and when he heard how great Tsong-kha-pa was, he was not convinced: "Is that so? I don't believe it. I have to go and see for myself!" This was his attitude. One day, harboring such a mentality, he arrived to see Tsong-kha-pa, who happened to be giving a teaching in that place. A person, Gyeltsabje, swaggered in. As soon as Tsong-kha-pa saw him approach, he quickly got up from the higher throne and sat on a lower throne to the side, sat there, and continued with his teaching. This Gyeltsabje surprisingly entered loudly and sat on the higher seat vacated by Tsong-kha-pa and pretentiously listened. Then, before the end of even one session, Gyeltsabje got off the throne. At the end of the session, he knelt in front of Tsong-kha-pa. Well! This teaching was never heard before, such extensive and

profound teachings indeed! Thereafter, he devoted his entire life as a disciple of Tsong-kha-pa and promulgated Tsong-kha-pa's teachings.

[13A, 21.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 158 L5]

This is why I said that we should not be concerned about being arrogant but about applying it in a wrong way! The key is to apply it properly – it has to be done right – this is most important. Who is the most troubling person in serious study of Buddha Dharma? Be concerned about those who lack motivation! Don't need to be concerned about the timid ones, don't be concerned about those wild ones; it is the same in our world, the worldly concern is the same. I am briefly mentioning it in passing, since I happened to think of it. Here, the text tells us what to do when we are explaining the teaching. However, suppose you are certain about the potential [of the student], then there is another approach that has been verified, that has gone through verification. For instance, the aforementioned great teacher and forefather, the ancient Chinese master in the history treated the disciple – [he] knew the disciple was qualified – so he did not need to be gentle with [the disciple], [the teacher] tormented the [disciple]. Eventually, [the disciple] attained [his] achievement.

[13A, 22.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 158 L12]

Further, *Gunaprabha's Sutra on the Discipline* says:

In the *Sutra on the Discipline*, this is one of the tenets in it. By reading it, we should be able to understand. For those who have yet to receive the precepts, you would know about this after your ordination. For now, just listen to it will do.

[13A, 22.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 159 L1]

While standing, do not explain the teachings to one who is seated; while seated, do not explain the teachings to one who is lying down; while you are seated on a low seat, do not explain the teachings to someone on a high seat. It is the same also with regard to bad and good seats. Do not explain them to someone walking in front while you walk behind. Do not explain them to someone walking on the path while you walk on the edge. Do not explain them to someone whose head is covered or whose upper or lower robe is pulled up, whose upper robe is folded and placed on the shoulder, or whose arms are crossed in front with the hands on the shoulders, or whose hands are clasped behind the neck. Do not explain them to someone with a topknot, wearing a hat, wearing a tiara, or whose head is wrapped in cloth. Do not explain the teachings to someone riding an elephant or a horse, to someone sitting in a sedan chair or carriage, or to someone wearing shoes or boots. Do not explain them to someone holding a staff, an umbrella, a spear, a sword, or other arms, or to someone wearing armor. It is suitable to explain the teachings to those who are opposite of these. Further, these instructions apply to persons who are not sick.

This is from the *Sutra on the Discipline*. It says that if he is standing higher than you, as the one who is explaining the teaching, standing in a lower position, you should not teach. This is not meant to compare heights – it is to show respect for the Dharma. In any circumstance, we should respect

Dharma in this manner – treat this Dharma with immeasurable respect. So, normally, when we beseech Dharma, [we] should request it with utmost respect. Do not be careless or indifferent: “Ah, how to explain this, how to manage it?” This attitude is wrong; it should not be like this, pay close attention! What about the opposite situation? “It is suitable to explain the teachings to those who are the opposite of these. Further, these instructions apply to persons who are not sick.” This means that the reason of the aforementioned is because he is under normal condition thus above conditions are not premised. However, if the person is sick, the same constraints do not apply. This is permitted in the precepts - allowed in the discipline. For example, there is a sick person lying in bed about to die. Normally, he lies there and you are not suppose to explain the teachings to him while you are standing. But, if there is a dying person and you are near him, it is permitted; this is what it means.

[13A, 24.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 160 L1]

The above section is how to explain and how to listen. At the end is the conclusion. Typically, when speaking, there must be a speaker and another party as the listener. Upon completion of explaining and teaching, the immediate response will be: it is done! Actually, there are proper rites for explaining as well as proper attitudes to listen. After explaining and listening, there is one more thing. Do we have this application now? Yes, we recite the verse of dedication, which has great meaning. However, we may have the formality of dedication, but do not necessarily grasp the content. Next, it will show us how to abide by the intended content. If you can truly abide by it, no matter whether [you are] explaining or listening, the merits will be immeasurable.

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[13A, 25.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 160 L7]

C. How a session should be concluded in relation to both hearing and explaining the teaching

What should be done upon completion of the explanation?

[13A, 25.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 160 L9]

With strong aspiration dedicate the virtues that have arisen from explaining and hearing the teachings to your temporary and final objectives.

Both explaining and listening to the teachings have tremendous merits. These merits, we should not wastefully let them go. There are people like that, but you should skillfully make good use of them, they will thus multiply infinitely. If you do not know how to apply them properly, the result will likely be the plight of three lifetimes, trouble for three lifetimes. Let me tell you such a story. This Venerable Han-shan [a Ming Dynasty high monk in China] became well known, very famous and remarkable! Once, he traveled from the north to the south [of China]. [He] stopped in Hang-zhou, wow, many came – it is unclear if it was Hang-zhou or somewhere else, I can't remember exactly – many came to listen to his teaching. There was a man called Liu Yu-shou who came to ask Venerable Han-shan: "I had had a dream this morning. In the dream there was a strong man with a protruding mouth that looked like pig snout." [The pig-man] told Liu: "In Tang dynasty, I once heard about a monk's teaching of a sutra, so I went to listen. Due to this merit, I was reborn in the Song dynasty and became a general." Who was this general? Cao-han.

[Note: according to Chinese history, this 曹彬 should be 曹翰.
曹彬 is a different historical figure]

[13A, 27.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 161 L5]

Cao-han was a famous general during the Song dynasty; at that time, [he was] fighting to seize a city. [He] fought for a long time with no progress. Finally, [he] seized the city and swore viciously to kill everyone in it. Just like that – the city was annihilated. Due to this cause, [he] suffered immense misery, and then was reborn as a pig for many lifetimes. [In the dream, the pig-man said to Liu] “In the morning, I am the pig that will be slaughtered, which has some previous connection with you [Liu], please come to my rescue.” [Liu] woke up from that dream and heard – he was staying on a boat traveling on a river – wow, the grunting noise of the pig. Alas! He remembered the dream and ran to the family who raised the pig, with the intention to rescue it, but the pig was already slaughtered. [Liu] went to the Venerable teacher [Han-shan] and asked, what was the dream about? The Venerable told him, “Well, yes, it was true. At that time, the one who listened to the teaching was the slaughtered pig – the pig’s previous life was the man who listened to the teaching. The one who gave the Dharma talk was you!”

[13A, 28.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 161 L14]

So even a mediocre listening to the teachings will have great merits, [the power of the merit] is definitely so. However, in these circumstances, if you do not know how to dedicate,

then it is called the plight of three lifetimes. He listened to only a single session of the teachings and yet received such blissful merits; however, there were nonvirtuous deeds, wrongdoings – so this resulted suffering in the hell realms, followed by being slaughtered for many lifetimes! What should we do now? “With strong aspirations, dedicate the virtues that have arisen from explaining and hearing the teachings to your temporary and final objectives.” I think we will continue tomorrow, because these statements deserve our earnest reflection to study carefully every time we apply them, which will bring us great merits.

Note:

Dynasty	Reincarnation of the 1st person	Moral of the story	Reincarnation of the 2nd person
Tang 618-907	Man who listened to Dharma	One random hearing of the teaching will accumulate blissful merits.	Monk who gave Dharma Talk
Song 967-1279	General Cao-han	Cause: wasted his dedication to worldly fame and power – he was a general, but did not dedicate properly and wasted previous accumulated merits by cursing and killing.	
Ming	A pig	Effect: suffered as	Liu Yu-shou

1368-1644		a pig, had to start all over to accumulate merits for a fortunate rebirth.	
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English LR v.1 p.66

[13B,00.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 163 L1]

Now let us turn to [page 66] of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. [We] need to know the importance of preparation in listening and expounding this extraordinary teaching. Right now, we are only becoming aware of this preparation and how important it is! Actually, many sutras have told us this, but we were never aware of how major its impact is on us. Since we do not know the great impact of preparation and we are not prepared, in this situation, it becomes useless for you to hear any more profound teachings and it is not useful to do so. Not only is preparation required prior to listening to and explaining the teachings, but also with such preparation we will reap the benefits at once in both listening and explaining. There is more after listening to the teachings – continue to apply accordingly. Therefore, not only will there be immediate benefits, but our minds will also grow. This is why [great practitioners] can mindfully resonate with the teachings. Whereas for us, due to lack of preparation beforehand and not knowing how to be in concordance with the teachings during the session, in the end, we close the text and return to our old self – completely unable to resonate with the teachings. Thus, look! The preparation in listening to the teachings is very important.

[13B,02.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 164 L2]

Now, with our understanding, “the virtues that have arisen from explaining and hearing the teachings” refers to the extraordinary benefits arising from both explaining and listening to the teachings. What should [we] do with such bountiful benefits? How can we implant them deep into our consciousness and thus maintain momentum and growth? If you are able to maintain this momentum, that would be the best way for us to practice – naturally, you will be accumulating merits day and night and clearing away karmic obstructions, continuing to advance without limit. So, after explaining the teachings, there is the “dedication” section that shows us how to be in accord with its content. In this way, it is not the same as the so-called dedication we do now for generating true efficacy.

[13B,03.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 164 L9]

Let’s look at the text: “with strong aspiration dedicate the virtues that have arisen from explaining and hearing the teachings to your temporary and final objectives.” This tells us what we should do. “With strong aspiration,” these [three] words can be described by one or two conditions. Let’s go over it now. “Strong” means mentally strong with joyous perseverance. A mental attitude filled with force to advance upward and forward – this is a type of powerful will. However, having only an impetuous rush is not sufficient, what is required? It requires being very clear, with great clarity and lucidity. Why are you able to have great lucidity? It is being endowed with correct views and wisdom. Moreover, with the correct views to accord to wisdom, and enhancing courage and the propelling force, things will be successful. Regardless of what we do, like driving, well, there must be accurate

manipulation of the steering wheel, and, then with the speed coming from the power of the cylinders, then you are driving on the road. This requires our experimentation.

[13B,04.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 165 L3]

At the same time, we can also use it to observe our own mental states. What are our minds like most of the time? Is there clarity? Is there strength? If not, then there is no concordance! This is due to our latent tendencies from beginningless time. Sometimes we do have mental strength, but it is not concordant with the teachings. Usually, the most fierce time is when we are angry, that is the force within! Actually, this will lead us to hell. Hence, we have to reverse it. Moreover, our desire is also powerful; this is why we refer to applying Buddha Dharma as transformation. That is, to reverse the wrongdoing to purify it. You still utilize the same object, like driving a car, but the original direction is turned around. The first direction is wrong; it is headed toward the miserable realms or still within cyclic existence. Once turned around, the direction will be the fortunate realms and then liberation, this is how it works! As for clarity, from the view of wisdom, [we are] still enveloped in a daze. Thus, it is not because we lack the ability, it is because we have applied it incorrectly. With your understanding, then you will recognize why the correct view is primary in learning Buddha Dharma.

[13B,06.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 165 L13]

Often, other than the fierce, sharp desire and anger, the rest of the time, the mind is either dull or filled with panic, not knowing what should be done! At that time, what should you do? Being either in the middle of strong and forceful desire or anger, the remaining time is occupied by gossiping with

someone here and there, just like that. So this situation is the greatest loss, very damaging. This is due to the form of latent propensity developed since beginningless time. Now, with this realization, [this habit] is difficult to change right away – this is a crucial point of practice. So, now that we have this understanding, what should be done? Have a strong and fierce mentality!

[13B,06.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 166 L4]

Next is “aspiration.” What is aspiration? It is our mental attitude – which is a different direction. This attitude is still like our desire and attachment. However, the direction of attachment is [toward cyclic existence] and now this aspiration is in the direction of yearning for virtue. This is what we need to focus on now, what we need to engage in mindfully. Thus, the direction refers to “dedicate the virtues that have arisen from explaining and hearing the teachings to your temporary and final objectives.” Not only do we want to ultimately achieve Buddhahood, but [these virtues] are needed right now, too! Once the immediate cause is correct, the ultimate effect will then become possible. By the same token, if you are doing it right at this moment, the ultimate effect will eventually be achieved. However, if what you do right now is wrong, it is considered the “plight of three lifetimes.” Therefore, this can be divided into the immediate present and ultimate achievement as two stages – each with different causes and effects, but the same direction – we must know this. Once you have this recognition, then things will certainly work accordingly!

[13B,07.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 166 L11]

What benefits do we have now? These can be experienced immediately. For now, if you do it right, then your mind will sense the fulfillment of Dharma joy. Even though you went through a lot of hardship, you feel joyful. If you continue, the effect will lead you to advance step-by-step, progressing on this ultimate path; this is very clear and obvious. In fact, [you] do not have to wait for the ultimate effect to arise; the fractional effect arises very quickly right now and can be experienced immediately. Do we usually have this [kind of experience]? Yes. Maybe not within the scope of Buddha Dharma, but it is in many worldly aspects, it is very common conventionally. If you are working on something with others – for instance, some competition – you work very hard and achieve it through overcoming difficulties. It could be winning a ball game. [Let me] ask you, how hard is it? Naturally, it is tough! However, at that time, [you] feel very joyful! So, any moment is in accordance [with our mental aspiration]. Now, we should not battle with worldly enemies, our afflictions are the enemy. Will it be difficult? Of course it is tough! But your mind will be delighted! This is how it works and this is our [task] for now.

[13B,09.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 167 L7]

Moreover, because you are engaged in this manner, let's apply one example! For instance, you are doing a great job now, others feel: well, this is a fine person. Your superior will be willing to constantly protect and promote you; your peers will support you and new colleagues will follow you – this is the immediate fractional effect! Isn't this clear? Thus, you advance accordingly and, eventually, the effect you achieve will be Buddhahood. Your peers around you will be Bodhisattvas, sravakas, and pratyekabuddhas and so on –

this is the ultimate [effect]. Hence, this is our actual wish and aspirational goal! Dedicate accordingly!

[13B,10.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 167 L12]

When you dedicate with this mental attitude, strong aspiration is required! This “strong aspiration” has a specific meaning. In our true karmic force – [we] talk a lot about karma – contamination is also karmic activity; purification is part of karma too. What is the actual key to this karma? It is our mindfulness; that is it. If you float about, this strength is not powerful. If your mental attitude is stronger, the force will be stronger, too. The stronger [your mental attitude is], the more powerful it becomes. This is the same at the time of dedication: “Ah! Upon hearing it, I want to mindfully abide by it! This is the way to go.” If you are able to correspond accordingly, the merits will be incredibly great.

[13B,10.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 168 L3]

If you explain and listen to the teachings in such a manner, then you will unquestionably receive the aforesaid benefits even from a single session.

If you listen or explain in such a manner and follow such logic – explain what? To explain “the specific teachings.” This “specific” teaching is very important. The word “specific” does not necessarily mean that opening the sutra is considered as specific teaching; it refers to whether you are actually corresponding with it. This is what is considered as the sublime teachings. If the explanation is about precepts: is the “Dharma” accurate, is the “essence” obtained, are the “deeds” aligned, and is the “sign of internal qualities” perfected. When these four – known as Dharma, essence, deeds, and sign of internal qualities – are properly upheld, then it is the actual

teachings of the Buddha. If it is apparently right but actually wrong, then it is only resembles Dharma and the rest is flawed. Just imitating the sign of internal qualities is not in accordance, but it will have some benefits. As long as you uphold this attitude for just one session – even if you only listened to or explained one session – “then you will unquestionably receive the aforesaid benefits even from a single session.” The benefit attained is great. According to the sutra, to explain or listen to one session of Buddha Dharma has incredibly huge merits! Extremely great [merits]. Often, we refer to upholding the precepts for an entire day or so and, if you are able to do so, the benefit is certainly great, ah! The preciousness of Buddha Dharma is truly peerless!

[13B,12.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 168 L13]

You will clear away all the karmic obstructions that have accumulated through not taking to heart the instructions on hearing and explaining the teachings and that result from not respecting the teachings and the teacher and so forth. Further, you stop new accumulation of these obstructions. Also, insofar as you have taken to heart this way of explaining and listening to the teaching, the instructions that are explained will benefit your mind.

It is divided into these three aspects [purifying previous karmic obstacle, stopping new accumulation, and being mindful of the teachings]. Regardless of whether you are explaining or listening, as long as you abide by the key points truthfully, because of this cause and condition, all the karmic obstacles from your previous actions are represented by one thing – not respecting the teachings and the teacher. This is

the most serious and severe [among all obstructions], any other great misdeeds are very minimal compared to it. So, in the sutra, it repeatedly says that Buddha can rescue you from the five heinous misdeeds [v.1 p. 389 #195 and p.341 #240]. However, upon slandering the teachings and teacher, [even Buddha] cannot help you, [you] cannot be helped. Thus, for this point, we usually pay very little attention; this is considered negligence! Being negligent toward the teachings! That is very terrible and awful! Hence, the wrongdoing of slandering the teaching can be purified, to say nothing of other minor misdeeds; this is the way it is! So this is the meaning for the first point. Thus, “clear away all the karmic obstructions” just by explaining and listening! For us to repent now, well, prostrate! [We] may prostrate for a long time, but purification may not happen. Whereas by listening and explaining one session [with proper attitude], this type of merit will arise. Maybe we have this doubt in mind: is that possible? Yes, it is possible! [Let me] tell you, it is definitely possible. The problem is that [you all] are not quite aligned yet. Once you apply accordingly, the effect of great merits will arise.

[13B,14.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 169 L12]

Moreover, “you stop new accumulation of these obstructions.” Since you understood it properly, of course you will not transgress. The reason for relapse is because of your remaining habitual tendencies, which can be of great magnitude. Now, if you are able to purify the habitual tendency then the [tendency] can be removed. Once you remove it, you will have an understanding of the logic and, naturally, [you will] apply properly so the relapse will not occur again! This is how it works! Often, we hear and understand but are unable to carry it out. Now, if you are able to achieve the first point

[explain and listen to the teaching], the following points can be achieved accordingly, the benefit is very great.

[13B 14.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 170 L2]

Let me repeat it again: the reason we usually hear and understand but are unable to apply it is because, although you recognize the theory, your latent propensity still aligns with the old habits. After listening to the teaching and closing the text, the momentum in your mind still corresponds with old habits. What is this? It is what we refer to as “karmic propensity,” which is a type of obstacle. Thus, this karmic tendency has a specific name of “concordant propensity” or “concordant effect” – part of the known: fruitional, causally concordant, and environmental effects [v.1 p.236]. If you can abide accordingly to purify via confession, well! The concordant propensity can be severed! Once it stops, it will not continue forward. Thus, as long as you can achieve the first point – stop [your disrespect] – by then, the momentum in your mind will correspond with the teachings and [alignment with the teaching] is also achieved! The benefit is very great! This is the second point.

[13B,16.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 170 L11]

The third one is, “insofar as you have taken to heart this way of explaining and listening to the teachings.” Because you are able to explain and listen properly, the content will truly benefit you both physically and mentally. That will be the time for actual efficacy – as long as your obstacle is there, it is useless. What does “benefit your mind” mean? What is the advantage? That is the time when you are conscientiously aligned with the teachings! The actual purpose of our practice

is sincerely aspiring for this cause. [By then,] you will clearly and definitely sense the constant increasing of merits and the obstacle will not block you.

[13B,16.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 171 L1]

Usually, we say that we must not have attachments. However, when the preferred and favorable conditions arise, you are totally unaware of being in the midst of attachment – [you are] completely dragged into it unknowingly. [You] try not to be angry, yet you don't even realize that you are submerged in it. [You] still feel that it is reasonable, one hundred percent a slave of anger without realizing it. At that time, if the concept that you have sincerely explained and listened to has benefited [your] mental continuum, well, and then you will not go along with it! Not to mention that you are able to recognize it – which is already not an easy task – [the anger] cannot influence you. Attachment, regardless of how favorable the object there is, you will despise it with a laugh: “Ha! You have always captured [me] as your slave. Now [your] influence will not work.” Once you have this capacity, then you are the master. For us now, we are the slaves of affliction. We express this me, me, me; actually we are slaves to it. For worldly beings, we are the slaves of money. If you have the ability not to be swayed [by money], then next you can be the master! Buddha Dharma is also built on this concept. Regardless of whether it is about practice, explaining, or promulgating the teachings, it all refers to this same concept. In summary,

English LR v.1 p.67

[13B,17.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 171 L11]

In general, after all the former excellent beings realized this, they practice earnestly;

The former practitioners and great teachers of the lineage realized these concepts and, thus, put a lot of emphasis on this point. [They] noticed that, after much explain and listen to the teachings for a while – farce! Why? It is due to lack of preparation ahead of time. So this point is very important and crucial.

[13B,18.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 172 L1] in particular, the former gurus in the lineage of these instructions made very earnest and great effort in this activity.

In particular, we are now studying the instructions from this Lamrim. The “gurus” from before – guru means teacher, especially those in the lineage – are the most important. The so-called “gurus” here refers to former teachers of the lineage with both scriptural and experiential knowledge. They put extra emphasis and importance on this. Actually it has a specific reason – we can figure it out by putting some effort into contemplation. Venerable Atisha was the upholder of Mahayana, Hinayana, profound-view, extensive-deeds, Sutrayana, Tantrayana, and so on and so forth lineages, without any left out. He compiled and used all the advantages of each school for application and compiled all the disadvantages from all of the schools to guide the later generations like us how to avoid them and make improvement. So, here, we might as well apply one scenario within our experience to understand the state of resonate accordingly – the state of concordance.

[13B,19.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 172 L10]

Here, with the teachings that [we] are discussing... as for us now, take a look at our current state. As a matter of fact, we have not aligned with the sublime and purified teachings yet – we are only starting to learn how to correspond to them. Thus, our concordance is based on contaminated worldly teachings – this is what we are resonating to. And our mental states are capable of being directed toward either sublime teachings or the worldly teachings. We might as well look at our mental powers by using the example of watching a ball game here today. I am referring to the youth baseball team playing in the United States. If you like basketball, you will watch it today. If you prefer watching movies, you will do that. You reply: “Wow! This is an international game for the international championship!” You have no preference [for either team] in the first place and, upon hearing this, “Wow that is great, awesome!” Everything else is set aside, you have to find a way to hear [the game]. The trigger will always be your attachment – either the movie or something else. With the preceding understanding [of how great the game is], you will rearrange things to focus on watching TV or a movie. I believe we are able to recognize this mentality, what is this mentality? It is to say, prior to listening, first explain the specific advantage of listening to the Buddha Dharma.

[13B,21.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 173 L7]

In other words, well! You need to generate this yearning for virtue in your mind, and then you will let go of everything and devote your complete attention to listening and watching! Just like that. Moreover, during the course of listening to the teachings, there are specific benefits initiated by the teaching itself, ah! This is how it works! At that time, you will be

engaged even further. Of course, those ballplayers are definitely not disappointing – certainly the performing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas now are definitely not disappointing. As for the teacher – for instance, he is facing the camera – he is certainly capable of delivering the essence [of the teachings] through the television to you. At that time, naturally, your entire attention will be occupied or you even forget about what you were watching and your physical and mental being becomes absorbed in it. When the performer is happy, you applaud, ah! How happy it is! If the performer changes moods, you will also become sad as though you have also lost. If you are watching a movie, when it is touching, you may have tears running down your face. I believe we all have this experience! What does this explain? What does it tell us? Your mind resonates with it! It is as simple as this, just this simple.

[13B,22.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 174 L1]

Now, if you listen to Buddha Dharma with this kind of resonate, what will be the situation? It is very simple! [You] have achieved [engaging in the teaching]! However, the resonating is not there yet – after hearing the teachings, you close the text and do not act in concordance with it, the teachings are nowhere to be found. If you have preparation prior to hearing and listen with interest, the teachings will remain while listening at the very least, but not afterwards. Whereas the aforementioned case, ah! After you hear it, alas! It is hard for the mind to let go! Just sitting in front of the television set, reluctant to move; even after it is turned off, everyone is still talking about it. Three days after that, thinking of nothing but this, we all have had this type of experience! Just like that! This is our mentality. It is very clear that, for now, as long as [we] properly utilize the opportunities, how

can we not attain it? Of course attainment is possible; it is definitely possible! Hence, there are too many such examples in the sutras: in Buddha's previous lives, through making offerings, beseeching teachings, or generating a joyous mentality, and then, ah! [Buddha] benefited for many eons after that. Eventually, [Buddha] exhausted the [worldly] blissful merits and reached the maturation of the causes and conditions, he achieved both arhatship of the Hinayana as well as the Mahayana attainment. The attainment of Mahayana does not need to wait for later!

[13B,23.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 174 L11]

So, take a look here, why is it that we have talked and heard so much yet have not received any benefit? What went wrong? This is [the cause]! So we always see this in the sutras: "Listen well, listen well, and hold it in your mind." Such a short phrase brings so much reason and knowledge! There is a lot for us to learn in it! Without this, what is there to talk about in your explanation of the sutras? What is there to listen to in the teachings? If there is any seed that remains, it is considered not too bad, that is all. However, when the seed is about to sprout and grow, [we] still need to go through this process – which is what we are studying right now.

Continue...

[13B,24.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 175 L2]

This is a great instruction.

Well, it is evident that this instruction is very important – it has all the primary essences.

[13B,24.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 175 L4]

You will not transform your mind without being certain about this. Without that certainty, no matter how extensively you explain the profound teachings, these very teachings often serve to assist your afflictions, like a helpful deity that becomes a demon.

These days, [we] see too many cases like those mentioned above due to lack of proper recognition and understanding [of the concept of how to listen and explain], which are the first steps. These mainly rely on listening and guidance from excellent teachers. [Let me] specify here, it is not the lack of excellent teachers, it is our untamed stubbornness – excellent teachers are in front of us, yet you push them far away. It is all about this “I,” which is the cause of not aligning with the teachings. Moreover, after your recognition and comprehension, there is another advanced approach – the mind needs to be transformed. If you understand and transform the mind, then [you will] be following the teachings. Otherwise, regardless of how profound, vast, grand, or accurate the Dharma teachings are, they are of no use! Not only are they not useful, they may bring more harm – “a helpful deity that becomes a demon.” The “deity” is specifically here to help us. There are two types of deities: the worldly deities are the protectors; “the highest deity” are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that guide and help us. As for the “demons,” they are just the opposite – they specialize in making trouble to bring you down. The intention of Buddha Dharma is to help you advance but, due to your lack of proper comprehension – not knowing how to listen and explain – after hearing or explaining, sigh! Not only did you not benefit from it, rather, you were harmed!

[13B,26.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 176 L2]

So, in this situation, this Dharma, instead of helping you, increases your afflictions! After we listen to the Buddha Dharma, we may have the reaction of: “Wow! The concept of the Buddha Dharma is such!” After listening, then [we] take this magic mirror everywhere to reflect on everyone to be judged as a demon or goblin. Moreover, after gaining an understanding from listening, then, in turn, explaining to others to increase personal fame and profit, [this is how afflictions] arise, just like that. In this circumstance, whether you listen or explain, the next rebirth will be very dreadful. Although, eventually, the advancement will happen, but who will want to do so? Who will be willing to suffer throughout the hell realm and start all over on this path again? This is to clarify “these very teachings often serve to assist your afflictions!”

Therefore, next,

[13B,27.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 176 L8]

Consequently, it is said, “If you mistake the date from the first day of the lunar month, the error lasts until the fifteenth day.”

This was the local expression at that time. It means that if you made mistake in the beginning, it will be wrong all the way to the end. The culture in India during Buddha’s time counted the month as the first quarter of the moon to the third quarter of the moon. The first half of the month was the first two quarters, and the remainder of the month was the last two quarters. The first half of the month the moon was gradually waxing, and the latter half of the month the moon was gradually waning. In other words, regardless of whether it was

the first or second half of the month, there were only fifteen days – if you were wrong on the first day, it would continue on. So it is the same for us, right! It is not a lack of the teachings, the key is that you don't even know how to listen to or explain the teachings from the very beginning. So the sublime teachings turn you into a demon, whereas others attain Buddhahood! Thus, we often blame others left and right for no reason. Now, I hear people like this and really feel sad, I was like that before. Now [I] need to change and it is not easy! I already discovered that this is not an external issue, it is my own mistake, and the responsibility is totally mine.

[13B,28.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 177 L4]

English LR v.1 p.67

[14A,00.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 181 L1]

Thus, those with intelligence should work at this way of successfully hearing and explaining the teachings and

The concept of actually explaining and listening to the reasoning, if you really think about it, as a person sincere about studying Buddha Dharma, and these are people with real intelligence – hard work is required, strive at it from here! This is where the hard work should begin! This is the starting point for us. Thus, from here I [recognize] many other secondary instructions also work in the same way. Because my teacher taught me during that time, now I deeply appreciate it. Back then; I wanted to learn about meditation or something else – how to fold my legs and so forth – he always reproached me, “Why do you bother with this!” Actually this [reproach] was very important, too important! Later I found out that once you recognize the skill of mindfulness, then advancement will be very quick when you fold your legs.

Otherwise, you form bad habits and it will be very hard for you to change; this is absolutely true. It should not be neglected, pay attention and distinguish clearly between what is fundamental and what is incidental. That is it.

[14A,01.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 182 L1] should have at least a portion of these qualifications every time that they explain or listen to the teachings. This is the most important prerequisite for teaching these instructions.

Regardless of whether one is explaining or listening to the instructions, the prerequisite – what is the most important prerequisite? Well, the prerequisite has various levels! The most important is the fundamental; you have to be certain of the path of the fundamental and the incidental – where are they? Sure, this place we have now, well, the classroom needs to be nice, cool, ventilated, and so on. If all of these were unavailable, that would be fine! As long as the teacher is an excellent instructor and you are a proper listener with a respectful attitude, this is the way it should be. Therefore, my teacher told me, “When I was in India, it was full of hardship! It was pouring outside and dripping inside; there was a windstorm outside and windy inside; such were the conditions. Regarding lunch, after eating, it was necessary to clean up quickly because the afternoon class used the same space.” It was better when I was there. Back then; some felt ... with a frown, the teacher would yell, “What are you up to! Are you still thinking about food?” Of course, they were not too worried about [being yelled at] – this actually happened – for their energy and attention [were on the teachings]. This is about the most important prerequisite. Of course, if you can have a

complete prerequisite, that is great, otherwise try to maintain the most important one.

[14A,02.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 182 L13]

At that time, the teacher* told us a story. There, it was very cold, the elevation was over 1700 feet, possibly higher than Ali-shan [a mountain in Taiwan]! Well, I am not too sure. In the winter, one year I was there at the end of September, the mountain behind [the town] was completely covered with snow, just like that! Now September had been over for a while, their winter was really cold! He told us, “When we started learning in the beginning ...” When they were in Tibet – a really cold place – in the winter, you could not even boil water in the mountains, it was just too cold. Regardless of how big the fire was, the water would never boil, just like that. And then he said, “I had never worn a pair of socks until I was over thirty years old!” It was not like what we have now, well, the room is so warm! After the teacher taught, [they] immediately prepared to debate outside – on one hand, this is the best way to learn, on the other hand, it is the best test.

[*This teacher is the founder of Institute of Buddhist Dialectics Lobsang Gyatso 1928~1997]

[14A,03.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 183 L6]

So in the beginning it was really unbearable. But, later, the skin thickened under the feet, such thickness! There were no shoes or socks, just “Ba!” stepping on the rock outside. With the first step, it was cold, but they couldn’t even sense the coldness because everything was numb. But he slowly, slowly was thus able to form these great attitudes. Of course, I am not expecting that we should all do that, but at least we should know the example of ancient scholars – these ancient

scholars do not necessarily mean people from hundreds of years ago. It means people during Buddha's time or the semblance time afterwards [500~1500 years after Buddha's time]. When they studied, there was a difference in the attitude of learning. We need to acquire it accordingly, need to complete it accordingly.

[14A,04.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 183 L12]

If you would rather not come to hear this and say, "I am not capable, I just don't want to listen," that is fine. Once here, thus I did earlier wish to compel you to come for a reason: you can more or less learn what a complete teaching is. Once the teaching of the small capacity is done, it is up to you whether you will continue or not. It is your choice not to come.

However, once [you] are in the class, snoozing is not allowed, today I specify it here. Of course, for special reasons, if you return very late with extra monastic tasks, that is an allowed exception. In this circumstance, even if you are sitting in the front and dozing off, I will teach you sincerely and, after that, I will continue to teach you. This is the cause I have to clarify here. In our minds, we have to resonate with the teaching, so to be fair to ourselves – before we can be fair to others – this is absolutely true and is the reality.

[14A,05.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 184 L5]

Wary of excessive verbiage, I have condensed the most important points. Understand them more extensively by using other sources. This concludes the explanation of the prerequisites for the instructions.

Well, excessive wording is not needed. The key is to briefly go over the important points. If you want to learn more detail, there are other sources. Thus, prior to our actual instruction,

there are several preparations that must be done ahead of time that are clarified here first.

[Note: Chapter 3 is considered as the preparation for actual instruction in Lamrim text.]

[14A, 05.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 184 L9]

So with such a complete teaching – how did this teaching come about? First, the greatness of the teacher – what a laudable practitioner [Venerable Atisha], he taught such encompassing teachings throughout his entire life. How [we can] explain and listen to such perfect teachings in order to resonate with this great teacher’s consummate state. By then, this next quote applies, “listen well, thoroughly and hold it in mind” – usually Buddha started teaching from here on [in the sutras]. As for us now, we should sincerely study the teaching taught by this excellent teacher – Lama Tsong-kha-pa.

CHAPTER 3 OUTLINE: HOW TO LISTEN TO AND EXPLAIN THE TEACHINGS

III. How to listen to and explain the teachings p.55

1. How to **listen** to a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great p.56

a. **Contemplating the benefits of hearing the teaching**

- i. “Through hearing, **phenomena are understood**,
Through hearing, **wrongdoing is overcome**,
Through hearing, what is **meaningless is eliminated**,
Through hearing, **nirvana is attained**.”

- ii. Through hearing, you become faithful,

The result of hearing is to engage in substantive practice; you will be released with difficulty from the fortress of rebirth.

- iii. Listen with 5 ideas in mind p.57

1. The idea of a **Jewel**, due to the fact that the teachings are rare because Buddhas seldom appear nor do their teachings.
2. The idea of an **eye**, since the wisdom that arises together with hearing the teachings becomes greater and greater.
3. The idea of **illumination**, since the eye of wisdom that has arisen will see the real nature [**emptiness**] and the diversity [**of all phenomena**].
4. The idea of **great benefit**, since in the end the teachings bestow the results of **nirvana** and **great enlightenment**.
5. The idea of **being beyond reproach** since from this very moment you will attain the bliss of **meditative serenity** and **insight**, the causes of nirvana and great enlightenment.

b. **Developing reverence for the teaching and the instructor.** p.57.

- i. Being free from arrogance means to listen with the following six attributes:

1. Listening at an appropriate time,
2. Showing homage,
3. Showing deference,
4. Not being resentful,
5. Practicing according to the instructor's words,
6. Not looking for the chance to argue.

- ii. Not bringing to mind the five conditions means to cast away the thought, “I will not listen to this person because he or she:

1. Has fallen from ethical discipline,
2. Is of poor lineage,
3. Has an unattractive physical appearance,
4. Is inarticulate,
5. Speaks harshly and unpleasantly.

c. **How you actually listen**

i. **How to listen overview**

1. Abandoning the three faults of a vessel. p.58
 - a. Being upside down;
 - b. Though held right side up, being dirty;
 - c. Though clean, having a leaking bottom.
2. Relying on the six ideas p.59
 - a. Thinking of yourself as a sick person.

- b. Think of the instructor as a doctor.
- c. Think of the instructor's explications as medicine.
- d. Think of earnest practice as the way to cure your disease.
- e. Think of the Tathagatas as excellent beings. p.62
- f. Wish that the teaching will endure for a long time.

ii. **Listen in such a way that you determine how these teachings apply to your mind.**

iii. **For the sake of all living beings, I will attain buddhahood.** In order to attain this, I must train in its causes; for this, I must know those causes. For this, it is evident that I must hear the teachings. Therefore, I will listen to the teachings.

2. **How to explain a teaching in which both the teaching and its author are great** p.63

a. **Contemplating the benefits of explaining the teaching** - you will come to have:

- 1. Recollection;
- 2. Intelligence;
- 3. Understanding;
- 4. Stability;
- 5. Wisdom;
- 6. Supramundane wisdom;
- 7. Little desire;
- 8. Little hatred;
- 9. Little ignorance;
- 10. Demons will not find an opportunity to harm you;
- 11. The bhagavan buddhas will think of you as a precious, only child;
- 12. Nonhumans will guard you;
- 13. Deities will bestow charisma and power on you;
- 14. Enemies will find no opportunity to harm you;
- 15. Friends will remain steadfast;
- 16. Your words will be trusted;
- 17. You will attend fearlessness;
- 18. You will have abundant happiness;
- 19. You will be praised by the wise;
- 20. Your gift of the teaching will be worthy of remembrance.

<p>3 mental poisons: desire, hatred, ignorance</p>

b. **Developing reverence for the Teacher and the teaching** p.64

Since the teachings are respected even by buddhas, when you explain the teachings, be very respectful of the teachings and the Teacher as well, remembering his good qualities and kindness.

c. **With what sort of thoughts and behavior you should explain the teaching**

- i. With regard to your thoughts: p.64
 - 1. Think of yourself as a doctor,
 - 2. The teachings as medicine,
 - 3. Those listening to the teachings as sick persons,
 - 4. The Tathagatas as excellent beings,
 - 5. Wish the teachings remain for a long time.
- ii. With regard to your behavior: p.64~65

1. Wash and make yourself clean.
2. After putting on unsoiled clothing, sit upon a teaching seat...

d. **Differentiating between those to whom you should and should not explain the teaching**
p.65

- i. Do not explain the teachings without being requested to do so
- ii. Even when requested, it is necessary to investigate to see whether or not the potential student is suitable to receive the teachings
- iii. And even when not requested, it is appropriate to explain the teachings to someone only if you know them to be a suitable recipient.

3. **How a session should be concluded in relation to both hearing and explaining the teaching**
p.66

- a. With strong aspiration dedicate the virtues that have arisen from explaining and hearing the teachings to your temporary and final objectives.
- b. If you explain and listen to the teachings in such a manner, then you will unquestionably receive the aforesaid benefits even from a single session.
- c. You have taken to heart this way of explaining and listening to the teaching, the instructions that are explained will benefit your mind.
- d. This is a great instruction. You will not transform your mind without being certain about this. Without that certainty, no matter how extensively you explain the profound teachings, these very teachings often serve to assist your afflictions.

Thus, those with intelligence should work at this way of successfully hearing and explaining the teachings and should have at least a portion of these qualifications every time that they explain or listen to the teachings.



Notes:

How many of us are willing to admit that our minds are sick?

How many of us ever thought about the instructors are like doctors to us?

And do we follow doctors' prescriptions properly?

Only by respecting others, especially teachers, we will gain respect when instructing others.