



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

English Commentary Book 6, ver 1.0

Printed by BW Monastery, Singapore
For use by students of the monastery only

Purpose:

This book contains the translation of Master Jih-Chang's commentary of the *Lamrim chapter 9 "Mindfulness of Death" and chapter 10 "Reflecting on Your Future Life*. 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.

Contents

Chapter 9: Mindfulness of Death 1~154

**Chapter 10: Reflecting on Your Future
Life** 1~78

CHAPTER 9: MINDFULNESS OF DEATH

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P144; 37A, 9.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P142, L11]

The actual way to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity

The actual way to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity is presented in three sections:

- 1. Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity***
- 2. Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of medium capacity***
- 3. Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of great capacity***

Now that we know about it, that's right, he categorized it into stages as such. Therefore, stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity, there is stages of path shared with persons of medium capacity and also stages of the path shared with persons of great capacity. The stages of the path is as such. We will steadily move up the path sequentially. First of which is a person of small capacity.

Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity

There are three divisions in this section:

- 1. The actual training of thought for a person of small capacity***
- 2. The measure of the attitude of a person of small capacity***
- 3. Clearing up misconceptions concerning the attitude of a person of small capacity***

Thus, formally, what is a person of small capacity? This is the first, explaining the qualities. After getting the qualities right, what are the quantities? So the second point is the measure of the attitudes of a person of small capacity, stating the required standards. For the third, "Clearing up the misconception", we need to examine when we do. Are there any errors, errors are not allowed. There are times when we focused on misconceptions. This needs to be eradicated. Now we look at the actual training for thought, it is divided into 2 parts.

The actual training of thought for a person of small capacity

The actual training has two divisions:

- 1. Developing a state of mind that strives diligently for the sake of future lives***
- 2. Relying on the means on the means of achieving happiness in the next life.***

The life of higher status, the actual life of higher status is to gain higher status life after life. Since it is higher status life after life, the subsequent life should be better than the current one. This is the special meaning behind higher status. Therefore, the life after this should be better, and when the current life ends, the next life should be better off. This is a very clear logic, no one is exceptional to this. Thus, our normal actual situation should be this way. Although we may earn one thousand dollars or ten thousand dollars, could be even hundred thousand dollars or one million dollars. We will never say, we will spend everything we earn today, finish it and that's it, wrong. It must be after earning, we will save

what was earned through hardship in the bank, why so? For seeking higher status.

So if you take a look at it seriously, no one is an exception. All will be doing the same thing. Of course, when I say that no one is an exception, it might sound a little exaggerated. In real life, some people might not be this way. I have heard interestingly about those people staying in the high mountains before. These people after earning some money would spend it entirely. What happened when there was too much money? He would buy cigarettes and lit several of them and smoked them all at once. He would feel very upset if he could not finish spending all the money. As for the wine, he would buy the best and got drunk on the roads until he could not even make his way home. Such people were really pitiful as anyone with a slightest bit of intelligence would not do that. Why? I feel this is truly no different from animals.

This is why this logic was already explained to us in the beginning. To really obtain a higher status, it means to seek the future life. We must also know that this current life will soon be over. Not only it is hard to say for the older folks, the same goes for the younger ones. For example, the day before, a great elder just passed on. That was Venerable Zhen Guang, our old Venerable's Dharma brother. I just heard not long ago that among the dharma brothers, he was the youngest. The youngest was the first to pass on. How do you guarantee that the youngest will not pass on first? This is the fact. With regard to dharma practice, we must really hold on to this principle, do not take things easy. Now the focus is on the first point of developing a state of mind that strives

diligently for the sake of future lives, how to get it done? Do it step by step.

Developing a state of mind that strives diligently for the sake of future lives

This is explained in two parts:

- 1. Mindfulness of death, the contemplation that you will not remain long in this world***
- 2. Contemplating what will occur in your future life: the happiness or suffering of the two types of beings***

Further divided, split it step by step.

Mindfulness of death, the contemplation that you will not remain long in this world

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P144; 37A, 9.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P142, L13]

Mindfulness of death has four parts:

- 1. The faults of not cultivating mindfulness of death***
- 2. The benefits of such cultivation***
- 3. The kind of mindfulness of death you should develop***
- 4. How to cultivate mindfulness of death***

From here, a simple explanation of the table of contents. Yes, the first thing is to seek the future life, this is higher status. So for the future life, what method do we use? That is the second. So the first is to develop the mind to strive for the sake of future lives, then this mentality will propel us to engage in the methods of practice. So how do we develop this mind? He said: "To contemplate that you will not

remain long in this world”. We are born in this mundane world, but we are not able to live on forever and death is definite. If it’s solely about death, everyone eventually must die, and that’s it. Unfortunately, after death, where do we go? It is not the end after we die, there is still a next phase, either we go up or down and what determines up or down? It is based on the karma that we have created in the current life, just like that.

[37A, 11.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P143, L8]

So what are the benefits of putting these two together? Firstly, we say that this current life will be over swiftly, this is meaningless. We need to prepare for the future life, and the future life is decided by our current life. So we need to immediately prepare and cultivate more virtuous activities, this is the true nature. With regard to the first point, he mentioned about “mindfulness of death”. Before we go into the actual text, no harm thinking it through, be it Zen or Tibetan, all great masters placed great emphasis on this. For example, Master Yin Guang(印光大师), there are many who practice recitations in this current generation and those who are really respectable are Master Yin Guang, Master Ou Yi and Master Lian Chi, they are the most recent great masters. They always say that if you fail to practice recitations properly, all you need to do is to paste the word “death” on your forehead and your recitation practice will be effective. This sounds very good and right, right as it may seem, but irregardless of how many times you recite it, it does not seem to work. If it works, then everyone will be practicing their recitations very well

isn't it? So why is it that this cannot be practiced well? In other words, although he knew this logic, why are there problems when put into practice?

[37A, 12.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P144, L3]

It is rather amazing when it comes to being mindful about death as it is a great knowledge. He tells us how to recite. The following teaches us that if we can grasp this principle and practice accordingly, success is guaranteed. This principle is not just pasting the word death on the forehead. You try writing the word "death" and paste it on your forehead. After pasting, that's it. Is it useful? No. It is not even comfortable pasting it on your forehead. After a while, this will be removed and thrown away. This is of course a joke, in reality, think of death. But thinking about death, because there is complete method, after thinking for a period of time, once the mind is relaxed, the word death is forgotten and once forgotten, it becomes useless.

[37A, 13.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P144, L10]

This is not the case now as we are taught a very ingenious method and that is to push and motivate ourselves in every aspect of our life. This will create a force that will spur us in our practice. Zen does the same too. The grand masters of the Zen are very keen about life and death. This is why we often hear people saying "Zealous about life and death". This verse is merely words hanging on the mouth, after saying, are they really anxious about life and death? Not a trace can be found. This condition can be seen on some, and why so? This is due to the lack of

complete teachings that we are unable to practice according to the teachings. Let's see what is taught in the following.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 13.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P145, L1]

The faults of not cultivating mindfulness of death

That is correct, we still need to wait slightly. "Mindfulness of death" is also divided into four divisions. First, being the faults of not cultivating mindfulness of death. It's because you have seen the faults and because of such great faults that you want to practice. On the other hand, there are so much benefits from practicing. Therefore, before practicing, we will touch on these two points, what are the benefits. It will motivate you. Without any mistakes, you will make haste and practice. Even before practice, you already have a strong motivation force. With this force, you will naturally practice. Subsequently, with this force to practice, he tells you the method and you will progress from there. This is the beauty of the stages of the path. Now let us take a look: if we do not cultivate Mindfulness of Death, not cultivating Mindfulness of death, what are the faults and shortcomings.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 14.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P145, L9]

As previously mentioned, there are four errors that impede your taking full advantage of your life: [Conceiving (1) the impure to be pure, (2) suffering to be happiness, (3) the impermanent to be permanent, and (4)

the selfless to have a self]. Initially, it is merely the conception of the impermanent to be permanent that is the avenue of much injury.

Through the journey, we are very fortunate to encounter great virtuous teachers. After meeting the virtuous teachers, he understand that to actually practice, it requires external factors like relying on virtuous teachers and internal factors such as a life of leisure and opportunity. Now we have acquired a life of leisure and opportunity and we are about to practice. But when we are about to practice, there was an obstacle, there is an obstacle. What is that obstacle? These are the faults and errors. There are four of these errors. Among these four errors, what are the four? Conceiving the impermanent to be permanent, suffering to be happiness, selfless to have a self and the impure to be pure. At this point, he does not talk about the other three but touch first on permanence and impermanence. There is a reason behind. Everything has its sequence. The first is the most serious obstacle. After removing the first most serious obstacle, the rest will in turn be removed. It is as such.

[37A, 16.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P146, L4]

The reason why we cannot practice after achieving this life of leisure and opportunity is due to the obstacles. What is the first obstacle? It is clinging to [our notion of] permanence when it is impermanent. It is obviously impermanent, but we still see it as permanent. We humans like to plan a thousand-year strategy. What is the reason why we are unable to practice now? It is because we are unable to let go, it is as

such ! Ah, this status, title and money and also... everyone is making a ten thousand years plan, isn't it right ? It is because of this that we cannot let go. When told to practice, we cannot let go of this, cannot let go of that. If say we are going to die tomorrow, there will not be anything that we cannot let go! This is very understandable. Therefore this error of conceiving impermanent as permanent is our number one injury. This error is further divided into two – coarse and subtle. We are still not able to feel the subtle, so we shall not discuss about it. We can feel the coarse error, thus naturally you will be able to go more in depth a step at a time.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 17.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P146, L12]

This conception is twofold: coarse and subtle. Of these two, in the case of coarse impermanence, which is your death, the avenue of injury is the very thought, “I will not die.”

In the midst of coarse, it is thinking that “I will not die”. It is not we are thinking that we will not die. We always think: Ah ya, it is due to our thousand years and ten thousand years planning, this is our state of mind. Thus, we fail to think about death.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 17.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P147 L1]

Everyone has the idea that death will come later, at the end. However, with each passing day people think, “I will not die today; I will not die today,” clinging to this thought until the moment of death.

Everyone is aware that at the end, towards the end, no one is an exception, everyone dies. Everyone would say that, “Ah-ya, we will just stretch out our legs (at death), isn’t it just like that!” We may be saying this, but do our actions resonate with it? Not at all. Among the things that we do every day, needless to talk about when we are feeling well, even upon death, we are still thinking, “I will not die today, I will not die tomorrow.” This is absolutely true! We may not have this situation, but let us take a look at those who are unwell. He will feel that, “Ah-ya, hurry up and get me a good doctor, ah-ya, and get well quickly! Still cannot let go of this and cannot let go of that.” We look at others and also understand, but then say, “Correct! It is not my turn yet.” Hey! In fact, how can it never be my turn?

[37A, 18.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P147, L10]

During the times when we fall sick, if we truly have the concept of impermanence in mind, the moment we are unwell, we will make every effort to recite Amitabha. Ah ya, is there a need to find a doctor? No no. What medication is this? When we are really sick, we will never make effort to practice recitation. We will definitely say, “I need to take a rest! I want a fast recovery. Quick, go find a doctor.” Isn’t this very understandably clear. Therefore, if we do not think about it, we will never know. The moment you think of it, the reality will set in, reality will set in. So, although we say, “Ai-ya, eventually we will die!” This does not serve any purpose, just empty words. Examine your mind and it will be very clear. What is going through in our mind? We are always thinking

that we will not die and make plans for thousand and ten thousand years.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 19.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P148 L4]

If you are obstructed by such an attitude and do not bring its remedy to mind, you will continue to think that you will remain in this life.

This sentence is the crucial one. Why did Buddha named this “error as conceiving the impermanence to be permanent”? An error that we have made since beginningless time, the most serious of all. This is conceptual attachment, it is a fault. How do you purify it? We need to bring the remedy to mind. This remedy is just like medication, you must bring the remedy to mind. It is useless if you do not bring the remedy to mind. Just knowing the principle is useless. The method of remedy is at a later part. It is because you do not formally apply the remedy, therefore, you are constantly enshrouded by this mentality and unable to see the reality. So although we say: eventually we will die! In reality, even close to death, when you are about to die, you are still thinking: Ah ya, quickly find a doctor, quickly give me some, find some ambrosia or miracle medication to save my life. We are all in this state of mind and constantly being covered by it. During this time, What kind of attitude will we naturally develop? Oh, wishing to live continuously.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 20.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P148 L13]

Then, as long as you have this attitude, you will continually think only of how to achieve happiness and evade suffering in this life alone, thinking, “I need this and that.” You will not engage in religious practice because you do not think about things of great importance, such as future lives, liberation and omniscience.

Because you are constantly preoccupied with the immediate things that led you to think in this manner: busy with such things cannot be avoided and none of these can be exempted. Ah-ya, this reason seems to be very valid. Ah-ya, this cannot be left alone, that cannot be avoided and this cannot be dispensed with. “you will continually think only”, our mind is always pre-occupied with all these things in any circumstances. What is the aim of thinking about all these things? “How to achieve happiness and evade suffering in this life” – therefore, we are preoccupied with what to achieve in this life. From here, let’s think, is this correct, is this correct? Thus, the ancients after attainments have a special trait – The body might be poor, but is rich in Dharma. Why is the body poor? Because he does not dwell on current happiness, cast away anything current. Even if the body is very skinny, it does not matter. This body is a result of karmic causes, something that you cannot even discard, why do you still want it? Even if we are well fed till plumb and fat, upon death, it only means wasting more fuel during cremation. How wronged! From dawn to dusk we are preoccupied with this. It is

such a pity that we are now rich in our body but poor in Dharma. It is because of current happiness that we are busy with from dawn to dusk.

[37A, 22.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P149 L11]

I just feel that everything here is already very good, and yet everyone feels malnutrition. The real nutrition that we need now is in the form of Dharma. Honestly if you are rich in Dharma nutrients, if we can pass on tonight and you want me to wait until tomorrow, I definitely can't! There is so much suffering, why wait? Why would you still want to get so preoccupied with the immediate things? Really misguided! This is why we need to pay attention here. At the moment, I do not impose it on everyone, but eventually, everyone will have to walk down this path. Just to briefly touch on this at this juncture. If you still cannot change this concept, put in more effort. One day we can truly concord with it, there's no hurry, no hurry. But this is our ultimate objective and when that time comes, you will naturally be able to experience true happiness.

[37A, 23.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P150 L3]

Since this has been clarified, thus, we must now take note. Once this kind of thought arises, take note: Ah! This is our thief coming to harm us! If you can think in this manner, we will not be deceived too much and instead we will have the opportunity to advance by that time. Because you have been busy with such good things day and night, naturally you will not be concerned about your future matters. Of course! If you

are too busy with current life issues, then you will not observe issues about your future lives and future liberation, not to even mention omniscience of the dharma. This is the path shared with the small capacity, medium capacity and great capacity. These are the things that are truly excellent and greatly beneficial. However, such thought cannot be developed, cannot be developed. What kind of mind is this? It is the intent for learning and practising the dharma. Even if occasionally,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 24.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P150 L10]

Although you may perchance engage in study, reflection and meditation, and so forth, it will be only for the sake of this life, and whatever virtue you create will be of meagre strength.

Even if occasionally we give rise to this mind and wish to diligently practice, but because you did not apply the remedy on the concept of the mindfulness of death, the true focus of your behaviour is with the present. What is known as practice is definitely to practice for future lives and to ignore the present. So you practice for a period of time, eh, after a while, due to lack of remedy (i.e. not cultivating mindfulness of death), the root problem surfaces again and you will be busy with the present life again. The moment you are busy with the present, the strength of the virtuous activities you cultivate will be of meagre strength. This is the principle. In reality, for example, we make serious efforts to recite the Buddha's name, make serious efforts to read. After a few prostrations, we feel giddy and say, "ah, cannot go on this way, I need to take a rest. If I

carry on prostrating, I will get giddy and lack nutrition.” So just after a few prostrations, you will think of tomorrow’s meal. I’m deficient in this, need to add more bean curd, add more peanuts. There are not enough vitamins, not enough chlorophyll, you will think of a lot, think very far. It is precisely this problem. It all originates from here. Therefore, even if you practice, whatever virtue you create will be of meagre strength.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 25.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P151 L6]

Moreover, since your practice will be involved with wrongdoing, sins, and infractions, it would be rare for these virtuous activities not to be mixed with causes of miserable rebirths.

Even during your practice, I’m sorry, you will be “involved with wrongdoing, sins, and infractions”, just like what was mentioned before. You will do and do but think of something else. The moment the mind is stirred, all the non-virtuous thoughts will be entangled. When the non-virtuous thoughts are involved, it becomes the cause for miserable realms. This is why it is difficult to obtain a human life, really difficult. If you do not examine it, it still feels fine. The moment you really examine, it’s absolutely true! Therefore, “it would be rare for these virtuous activities not to be mixed with cause of miserable rebirths”. Thus, engage in pure practice, this is extremely precious and rare. The reason lies in the fact that the concept of “impermanence” is not cultivated and being blinded by “permanence”. Therefore, “the error of conceiving the

impermanence to be permanent” is the first and most serious gate of learning and practising the Dharma. Assuming you have practiced, what then?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 26.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P151 L13]

Even if you try to engage in practices directed toward future lives, you will not be able to prevent the laziness of procrastination, thinking, “I will do it eventually.”

Now that I say, ok, I shall make effort to practice for my future lives. At the initial stage of practice, is practice, practice, practice, practice, practice. After a while, getting slower and slower, our pace gets slower and eventually back to the old self.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 27.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P152 L2]

By passing time in distractions such as sleep, lethargy, senseless talk, and eating and drinking, you will not attain proper achievement, which comes through great effort.

Till the time you gradually slow down, “distractions such as sleep, lethargy, senseless talk, and eating and drinking”. These are the things that wasted our life of leisure and opportunity, all wasted. At that time, you will have no means of great perseverance. Learning the Dharma requires great perseverance. This perseverance has a characteristic: It is not about doing everything diligently, but you have to strive very hard to engage in virtue. This is called perseverance. Now, if you put in much effort

engaging in non-virtue, this is not perseverance! Thus, this perseverance comprises of two factors: First, you must be doing it diligently and the other is to practice in accordance with the teachings. Thus due to these, all problems ensue.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37A, 28.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P152 L8]

If you are thus seduced by the hope that this body and life will last for a long time, you will create strong attachment to goods, services, and the like.

Because we are blinded and misguided by (the idea of) permanence, in this contrary state, thus we feel that, “Eh, I want to live on forever!” Therefore, we naturally want to protect it, get deceived by it, so we want to protect it. What do we need in order to protect it? Fame, respect and greed! Greed arises, why? This is the reason. When you know that you will die today, what else is there to crave after? (This greed) Will not arise. In the event that the thing which you want is being obstructed by others, or you suspect that others are causing obstruction, your hostility will rise strongly. Why is there hostility? Because others are causing you harm! Harm what? Resulting in you not being able to achieve your fame. There is this close knitted relationship between greed and hostility. And if you are not aware of this thing that is obviously harmful, what is this? Ignorance! So, greed, hostility and ignorance are all derived from here.

[37A, 26.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P153 L3]

The moment you give rise to the mindfulness of impermanence, the greed, hostility and ignorance will be gradually reduced to a minimum. Although the roots of greed, hostility and ignorance are not present, but the serious “favourable conditions” of greed, hostility and ignorance are there. So if at the beginning you can grasp this, there will be no favourable conditions. Without these favourable conditions, the seeds will not grow, this is as such. If you were to die now, regardless if people were to look upon you as a president or say that you are a villain, you will turn a deaf ear to it. There is no such thing as greed, no such thing as hostility. This is the reason.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P145; 37B, 00.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P155 L1]

As if swept away by the current of a river, you will be immersed in strong hostility towards what prevented you, or what you fear might prevent you, from having these objects of attachment; in delusion that is ignorant of their faults; and, as consequence of these two, in afflictions such as pride and jealousy, as well as strong secondary afflictions.

Due to the fame and respect as aforesaid, although the greed, hostility and ignorance are poisons, there are other forms of stronger afflictions and by-afflictions, all of them will come along. What will it be

like? As if like a waterfall – great in volume and violent. Wow, coming in this manner. We have no means, absolutely no means of handling.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 00.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P155 L5]

As a result of this, you will do more non-virtuous actions each day

Due to this relationship, each day of ours, this “each day” is a moment by moment, a moment that amasses every second, time and day, year and month, even a long eon and the span of infinite rebirths, all are on this. As we are enshrouded by the error “conceiving the impermanent to be permanent” giving rise to afflictions and creating karma, thereby increasing our non-virtuous karma in the cyclic existence, in the three realms. This force is very powerful and strong. This force leads us to the miserable realms with endless sufferings. Currently, before we take rebirth, what are the causes that we planted? They are the ten non-virtuous karma of the body, speech and mind. Using a different way to categorise, it means “five deeds of immediate retribution and other misdeeds approaching these in gravity”, or immediate retribution or close to the five deeds of immediate retribution.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 01.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P155 L5]

such as the ten misdeeds of body, speech and mind, the five deeds of immediate retribution, other misdeeds approaching these in gravity, and the repudiation of the excellent teaching, all of which have the full power to induce strong suffering in places such as the miserable realms.

We have created countless non-virtuous karma and amongst all, the worst would be the repudiation of excellent teaching. The sin of repudiating excellent teaching is the most appalling. This is why the Mahayana teachings said that the Bodhisattvas are able to save us from the fivefold relentless retributions, but the retribution from repudiation of excellent teaching cannot be salvaged. Although it is unlikely many dharma practitioners will commit the fivefold relentless sins. However, as for repudiation of teaching, the fine violations are extremely difficult to avoid. Now that we have learnt a little, we became very stubborn. We feel that we are right and easily slander others. This fault is very easily committed and very terrifying. Therefore, everyone is strongly encouraged to read up more on the great scriptures and commentaries.

[37B, 2.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P156 L12]

This is why it was stated clearly in the Lotus Sutra: When Buddha was born, he used various ways to guide sentient beings. Be it that the person recites

the name of the Buddha or made a bow to the Buddha's statue, he is capable of attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, Buddha used many avenues to attract and guide him. Of course the same goes for the great teachings. If you repudiate the teachings, does it mean that the Buddha is inferior to you?

Ten Cakras of Ksitigarba, Mahayana Great Collection Sutra 《地藏十轮经》 also stated very clearly that the Buddha used different methods to guide different types of sentient beings and for every teaching that Buddha gave, while accumulating the collections of merits, it was by giving his life, eyes, brains and marrows. Consequently, after receiving them, as he was giving his teaching, you simply went over and said: this is not according to the teachings, that is not according to the teachings. This is equivalent to you throwing a priceless treasure into the furnace! We tend to have this fault. Are you able to pay a price for it? Ah, putting compensation aside, this thing, this thing about Dharma, the moment you slander it, it is extremely terrifying. That is why it is vital to know that we are ignorant. This first point is very important. Also, never to look at the faults of others, it is only correct to look at your own faults. If you look at other's misdeeds, then you are wrong. It is here that we need to use the Dharma mirror to reflect on ourselves and purify ourselves.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 4.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P157 L8]

You will sap the life out of high status and certain goodness by increasingly distancing yourself from the remedies-the nectar of the well spoken teachings.

Not only increasing non-virtuous karma, what about virtuous karma? What is the solution to non-virtuous karma? Virtuous karma. Just because you are busy from dusk to dawn with such things, very naturally you're immersed in affairs related to greed, hostility and ignorance. All Dharma is targeted at our greed, hostility and ignorance, this is the genuine "well spoken", this "nectar" is the correct method that is able to save us, to jump out of this cycle of rebirth. As we are occupied with our current things, very naturally we will cast this aside. And since we do not practice this, high status and certain goodness will be cut off.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 5.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P157 L14]

Then, death will overcome you and bad karma will lead you into a hot and unpleasant place among the strong and harsh sufferings of the miserable realms. What process could be worse than that?

Once our life is over, life is over and ended. Because of the fact that we are blinded by the concept of permanence when we were alive, we created much non-virtuous karma. Since we have created non-virtuous karma, where will we be led by such karma?

To places of pain, suffering, coarse burning that we do not like. Think about it, is there any other place worse off than this? Therefore compared to this, what “this” refers to – blinded and misguided by the error of conceiving the impermanence to be permanence. This is why the first of the four errors of “permanence, happiness, self and pure” is this permanence, the error of permanence.

[37B, 6.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P158 L7]

As we have mentioned before, remember! This error of conceiving the impermanence to be permanence without bringing the remedy to mind is useless. This cannot be corrected by simply listening. Pay close attention! You must listen, understand and do it step by step. Not saying that you listen today and be able to do it immediately. If you think that you’ve comprehended but anxious that you are not able to do it, this is not necessary. You should comprehend what to do and follow accordingly. This is the correct sequence. It will only be effective if you truly practice it.

[37B, 6.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P158 L12]

We have some people who simply do not make effort to listen properly. Some listened and understood, felt that it cannot be achieved and became troubled. In the end time, it is still wasted, not fruitful at all. Instead, you should truly comprehend and explore accordingly. The true fact is, you need to practice seriously. What is he talking about? How do I go

about practicing? It should be after listening, rest a few minutes, immediately sort out what was said earlier and find reference materials. There are too much things to learn and strive, no time for idling at all! If you are not able to do in this aspect, naturally all your faults will surface, as after listening, the book is cast aside. Although you have listened and understood but there is no cultivation. Another type of person would be one who wants to practice but feels that it is not achievable. Thereafter, feeling all miserable and then paused here, this is also useless! The sequence must be made very clear, must be very clear.

[37B, 7.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P159 L6]

As for another type, he has indeed listened and understood and when he is about to practice, even though he heard and understood the teachings, he engages in his own way of reciting the Buddha's name and prostrate to Buddha. This becomes what was mentioned previously, the 2 extreme ends of the continuum. He took a map and tells you the route to take and after the map is being understood, when it comes to actual walking, the map is being thrown away and instead ran in another direction. The map says to travel towards the east, but when he walks, he travels towards the west, this is also not aligned. Every aspect needs to be clear and understood. It doesn't mean that we do not do prostration or recite the Buddha's name. In the later part, he will explain very clearly on how to go about doing prostration and recitation so that it is aligned with what you have

learnt. This prostration and recitation are of utmost importance, but they have complementing methods. We will just briefly touch on this at this juncture. Below is another quote from a commentary:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 8.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P159 L13]

The Four Hundred Stanzas : What could be more dangerous. Than to sleep as though at ease. While subject to the Lord of Death, Ruler of the three worlds, himself without a master?

Quoting from the above commentary, this “Ruler of the three worlds”, in actual fact, we have no control over this Ruler of the three world who is Yama. What are three worlds? The past, present and future. In other words, we are going around within these three worlds, whirling round. We will not realise if no one tells us. With regard to this fact of cyclic existence, we do not understand, never learn anything about it and no one to teach us. Therefore, we felt that everything was relaxed and peaceful. This “sleep” does not refer to the sleep that we experience at night, rather it refers to dreaming with ignorance under the broad daylight, we need to understand this. Now we feel that it is actually quite comfortable, this is delusion, delusion influenced by ignorance. “What could be more dangerous”, nothing in this world can be worse than this. What is the purpose of telling us all these? It is to let us understand impermanence. This three worlds, cyclic existence within three worlds, is not something that we can see in our past,

present and future lives. It refers to the previous instance, current and next instance. In fact, there is no such thing as previous instance! You see, as we are talking, time is slipping by, since when did it stop! You see, although we think about instance by instance, we felt that very short moments exist, in actual fact is there? No, it is basics! This is where we are so misguided.

[37B, 10.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P160 L12]

Therefore we need to find the real issue we need to act upon. After finding, you will realise that your stream of life never once stopped. Every second, every what, every instance, your life is diminishing every instance! Thus you will make your best effort to practice, this is something we should recognise. If you do not recognise this, it is going to be terrible! This is why the most serious step in practicing is to see if you are able to recognise this.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 10.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P161 L1]

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds : I will have to depart, leaving everything. But, not knowing this, I committed various sins. For the sake of friends and foes.

What happens after death? Splendid, “leaving everything”, discarding everything. Now I do not know! “I committed various sins. For the sake of friends and foes”. Because we do not understand that everything will be discarded, end up getting

preoccupied with all the unrelated matters, whether friends or foes. Busy with all these, busy with all these and commit sins for them.

[37B, 11.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P161 L5]

Maybe we will say: True, we are preoccupied with friends but not with foes. Wrong! Though we are preoccupied with friends, we are more preoccupied with foes. What are we preoccupied with foes about? Hostility! Very simple. As for friends, what are we preoccupied with? Attachment! As for those who are neither friends nor foes? Ignorance! Think about it, is it correct? Assuming that you really understand, towards our friends, there will be no attachment, towards foes, there will be no hostility and no ignorance towards those who are neither friends nor foes. Then that is correct! This is what we really need to understand. Thus, due to our lack of understanding, not cultivating mindfulness of death produce such great faults. We are fortunate to obtain this life of leisure and opportunity and also understand its value. So why are we not seizing the opportunity to practice? We do not understand the characteristics of impermanence. Thus, not understanding the characteristics of impermanence is the greatest disaster.

[37B, 12.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P161 L12]

Lastly, there is a particular phrase that needs to be emphasized. Though understanding is not easy, to really put into good use still requires contemplation

according to the teachings. This is our own business, otherwise it will be as if wasting away the priceless treasure that we have gotten. Very important! Very important!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 13.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P162 L1]

2' The benefits of cultivating mindfulness of death

So what are the benefits of practicing?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 13.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P162 L3]

When those who have a little understanding of the teaching conclude that they will die today or tomorrow, they see that friends and material possessions will not accompany them, and so they stop craving them. Naturally they then wish to take full advantage of their human birth through virtuous deeds such as giving gifts.

Assuming that we practice according to the teachings and bear the thought of death in mind. To cite an example, because... why do we need to have an example? Actually, we have not started practicing yet, we do not know. However, we will be able to understand from this example. Take for example, if it is certain that we will die tomorrow, or that we will definitely die today. Under this situation, all you need is a little understanding of the circumstances of the Dharma [in such a situation]. With regards to your relatives and possessions, you'll clearly know for sure that upon death, none of them can be brought along. At that point, the feeling

of craving etc towards them will not arise, all will be prevented. What will we do after that? 【Naturally they then wish to take full advantage of their human birth through virtuous deeds such as giving gifts】 You will immediately practice! In another words.

[37B, 14.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P162 L11]

Now, the reason why we are not able to let go, is this. Ai-yah, cannot let go of this, cannot let go of that, this is important, that is also important. But the moment you think, “Tonight (I’m) going to die.”, you will be able to let go of everything. Even when told not to give it up, you will not be able to do it. Because all of these things here (this life) will eventually be useless and not able to use there (next life)! Then after you really give it up, you truly bring this (the concept of letting go) to your next life! It is like this. This is something that everyone can understand through experience. In another words, it means that everyone has this ability, not that they don’t! It is a pity and unfortunate that it isn’t put into appropriate good use! Not only it is not put into proper use, it is used to harm oneself. This is where the Dharma is truly valuable. The Dharma will never make us do things that is beyond achievement. The Dharma let you know how to correct the things that you have done wrongly. This is really important. We need to understand this. Therefore, Dharma is a complete set of education and not merely words, not a baseless theory.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 15.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P163 L5]

Just so, if you create an authentic mindfulness of death, you will see that all toiling for worldly things such as goods, respect, and fame is as fruitless as winnowing chaff, and is a source of deception. Then you will turn away from wrongdoing.

In this manner, after this practice, you will realize that in this world, be it respect, fame or goods, all worldly things in front of us now are like what? They are just like winnowing chaffs. After harvesting the rice crops, through winnowing, the rice grains are left behind and the chaffs are being blown away. These chaffs are useless. Now everything in our mundane world are just like those chaffs, simply useless. They have no true meaning, thus “fruitless”. Not only that, they are a “source of deception”, where all harm originates. Only upon understanding, then you will be able to “turn away from wrongdoing”. All sins will be blocked, it is this simple, this great!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 16.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P163 L13]

With constant and respectful effort you will accumulate good karma by doing such virtuous deeds as going for refuge and maintaining ethical discipline. You will thereby bring lasting significance to things, like the body, that would not have had such significance.

Because you have practiced, and when practicing, look! “constant and respectful effort”. In terms of time, do not allow

it to break, in terms of time do not let it break, this is called “constant”: During practice, be very serious, put in great effort. With such perseverance, this is then true joyous perseverance. So what are we practicing? “accumulate good karma by doing such virtuous deeds as going for refuge and maintaining ethical discipline”. This is truly virtuous, this is not deceptive and not bad. Therefore under such a situation, although our body is empty, unreal and is lack of any significance, we have made use of this body that have no significance to practice and achieve various lasting, excellent and genuine karmic fruits. Because you made such tactful use,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 17.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P164 L6]

You will ascend to a sublime state and will lead others there as well. What could be more meaningful?

For yourself, you will be able to ascend to a sublime state, this is benefitting self. Similarly, this method can be used to guide others. So regardless of benefiting self or others, it all depends on this, all depends on this. There is nothing better and more beneficial than this! We are now all preoccupied with things that are not related to this while the real important thing is this, is this. Therefore do not say basic recitation. He always say to place the word “death” on the forehead. To the Mantra vehicle, this is the highest. From the beginning, he will cultivate Mindfulness of Death. Unfortunately, we always feel that the great teachings of Mantra vehicle is very good and abandon all the earlier foundations. If we

cannot even cultivate the fundamentals, can we still cultivate the teachings of the Mantra vehicle? This is really hilarious! You do not even understand this when you cultivate, how will you cultivate? This is something we ought to understand.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P146; 37B, 19.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P164 L14]

For this reason, the scriptures use many examples to praise the mindfulness of death. The Great Final Nirvana Sutra says : Among all reapings, the autumn harvest is supreme. Among all tracks, the track of elephant is supreme. Among all ideas, the idea of impermanence and death is supreme because with it you eliminate all the attachment, ignorance, and pride of the three realms.

Therefore, based on scriptures, various kinds of scriptures praise and use many metaphors to describe the auspiciousness and wonderful benefits of “impermanence”. Over here, the “Great Final Nirvana Sutra” was quoted, there is a reason behind this! From the start, Buddha had already encouraged, and told us that “the blazing flames of impermanence ought to be promptly extinguished”. Up till the point when Buddha was about to leave, he continually instructed on this same teaching. From here we can see the importance of this teaching! What did he say? “Among all reapings, the autumn harvest is supreme”. Of all the cultivation which is the best? Of course it is during autumn, as it is the harvesting period. “Among all tracks, the track of elephant is supreme”. Of all foot prints, that of the elephant is the largest. So, among our common ideas and thoughts,

what (is most important)? “The contemplation of impermanence and death” is the most important. During the course of our usual thinking, what is it? “Thoughts of death” is the most important. However, we are the exact opposite, we spend the entire day thinking about permanence. Ah, this human life that we have hardly reaches a hundred, but we plan for ten thousand years, thousands of years. Now that Dharma is telling us about impermanence, think about it, keep thinking about it, why? With the thoughts of death, all the “attachment, ignorance and pride of the three realms” will be eliminated. Not only in the human realm, even as deities, after eighty-four thousand great kalpas, you still have to come down. There’s nothing to look forward to, nothing to desire. If you can remove this, your practice will be successful!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 37B, 21.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P165 L13]

Similarly, it is praised for being the hammer that instantly destroys all afflictions and wrongdoing, for being the gateway into the instantaneous achievement of all virtue and goodness, and so on.

So like this, not only what was mentioned earlier, all our afflictions and wrongdoings. “Afflictions” represents faults, and wrongdoings represents karma. Regardless of faults or karma, these are the causes for us to be in cyclic existence! You want to counter this, very difficult, very difficult. However, if you are mindful of death, hey, then you will destroy this immediately, it is “instantly destroyed”, just like a big hammer. Other things will not work, but this big hammer will crush everything to bits and pieces in a single strike, this is

absolutely true. Anyone at any time, the moment you think of, “I’m going to die immediately!” You are unstoppable by anything, you will throw out all afflictions, this is absolutely true. What we are lacking now are the complete theory, together with contemplation and practice that is in accordance to the teachings.

[37B, 22.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P166 L8]

If we are able to eliminate our afflictions, then splendid! We will turn to the “gateway into the instantaneous achievement of all virtue and goodness, and so on”. We will be able to achieve all virtue and goodness. It is “instantaneous achievement”. The moment you think about death, no time, and you will do it immediately. Procrastinate over other things, for other things, this will not work, that will not do, neither tomorrow, nor the day after tomorrow. Eventually you will do it, just that you are not sure how long you’ll procrastinate it. But once you think of this, you cannot even wait for the next second, it has such benefits! Therefore the sutra says “it is praised for”, that is root instructions, let us take a look.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 37B, 23.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P166 L15]

The Collection of Indicative Verses : Understanding that the body is like a clay vessel and Similarly, that phenomena are like mirage, Here you destroy the demons’ poisonous flower-tipped weapons And pass beyond the sight of the Lord of Death.

We ought to understand that this body is just like a “clay vessel” and clay vessel is something that is very fragile, just one touch and it could break. With regards to the phenomena that we are facing now, the phenomena of everything that is taking place. Those with real wisdom will understand that they are just like mirage – emptiness. During the summer period when the sun is hot, and when you look far on a stretch of road, you’ll noticed something like water (puddle). But when you run over to look at it, there is actually nothing there. It seems to be there but in reality, it is not. If you can understand this, be it the goods in this world or whatever, there’s nothing that can entice you. Therefore, “demon’s poisonous flower-tipped weapons”, this is a form of temptation, “weapons” is a form of threat. Thus regardless of temptation or threat, it has no effect at all. There is no more greed, no more hostility. You know very clearly, ignorance is also gone. Since there is no more greed, hostility and ignorance, where do you go? When that happens, the Lord of Death cannot find you anymore. If you can achieve this, is “pass beyond the sight of the Lord of Death”. A place where Load of Death cannot locate us, this is what we should be gearing towards.

[37B, 24.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P167 L11]

Please turn to page 147 of “The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment”. If we understand that our human life of leisure and opportunity is hard to come by, and that impermanence is speeding by us. The term of speeding impermanence, the real meaning is that, no one can assure when we will pass on. If we can understand this,

then we will realize that this body of ours, is so unreal. The term “clay vessel”, this is still something with form, very fragile and very easily broken. Secondly, it is like the “mirage”, it seems to be there, but in actual fact, it is not, this we need to understand. One states that it is fragile, another states that it is actually delusional, do not see it as something factual (real), do not see it as something dependable. If you can recognize in this manner, then there will be many things in this world that cannot obstruct you. Be it good or bad, thus “the goods will not be able to entice and the powerful will not be able to threaten”. Under such circumstances, you will have the opportunity to jump out of the sufferings of rebirths. During then, the Lord of Death will not be able to seek you. Continue..

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 37B, 26.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P168 L5]

Also : By seeing aging, the suffering of sickness, And dead bodies from which the mind is gone, The resolute abandon this prisonlike home, While ordinary worldlings can never eliminate attachment.

We will see that our body — the moment we have this body, the ending will be aging, sickness and various suffering. Once this lifetime is up, both our legs straighten, and finished! Upon seeing and understanding this point, we will know that the only solution is to practice diligently while we are still alive, this is the true warrior, warrior. Currently, the moment we have a little something with another person, we will feel like going into an argument and feels fearless against anyone. Such person in fact is not a true warrior. What the true warrior sees and wants to eliminate is not this. A true

warrior wants to conquer his own afflictions. A true warrior upon understanding the true phenomena, will be unmoved, regardless of the happenings, this is a true warrior.

37B, 28.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P168 L14]

Currently, the moment when we see something going on, ai-ya, we will stare hard at others and get involved in a major confrontation. (Thinking) All these people are ignorant, fools, a bunch of ignorant fools! In the face of afflictions, we totally cannot identify (the afflictions) and endure. In this manner, we are being led by the nose because of it and still unaware, totally useless. Animals are just the same, when you go towards the animal, the dog will just dash towards and start to bite you. Aren't we just the same? He angered you and you in turn made a commotion, aren't you just like an animal? "Real man" are all like that, this is what we really need to recognize, such people are termed as warriors. If you think that you are capable, you should know in which area you are capable. Small little afflictions, being affected by little afflictions and still very proud of yourself. Such people are really pitiful. For those who think that they are warriors, you need to grab hold of this! For those who think that they are warriors, you need to grab hold of this! Those who are able to eliminate the worldly defilements, this is the real prison – "abandon this prison-like home". The others in the world – "ordinary worldlings", these people cannot, they cannot abandon, abandon what? Attachments, attachments! This is what we ought to understand.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P173 L1]

In brief, the only time to accomplish the aims of beings is now, when you have attained a special life of leisure and opportunity. The majority of us remain in the miserable realms; a few come to the happy realms, but the majority of these are in situation that lack leisure.

In summary, in order to really cultivate, to jump out of this suffering cycle of existence within the three worlds, there is only one chance - to obtain the human body, the auspicious human life of leisure and opportunity. Like our current self, although we may not have the completeness of it, but at least we have a temporal body to practice. In reality, in our current state, we have to understand one thing. The phrase "we have been living for a long time in the miserable realms" is there to encourage us. All sentient beings have been in cyclic existence in the three worlds, a long period was spent in the miserable realms. Although we come back occasionally at times and obtained the human body but in the end, we are still unable to practice the Dharma: possibly mundane intelligence, or reborn in places without the Dharma teachings, or being born as blind, deaf and mute. We are able to avoid such physical forms mentioned currently; that is, not reborn in places without the Dharma teachings, and we believe in the Dharma and acquired the five sensory faculties, these are precious gems, we need to take good care of ourselves. There is one crucial way of doing so, do more observation, more contemplation. Do not allow such life to be wasted easily. Following,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 2.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P174 L3]

Therefore, you do not get a chance to practice the teachings in these situations. Even when you have gained the circumstances allowing for practice, the reason that you do not practice the teachings properly is the thought, “I will not die yet.”

Therefore, the thought that you will not die is the source of all deterioration,

This is such a rare opportunity that we encounter the teachings, yet we still do not practice in accordance with the Dharma. Why is this so? It is because we have been blinded by the thought of “I will not die yet, blinded by the thought of “I will not die yet”. Let’s explain further with regards to this point. It is not a matter of whether I want to die or not, no, it is not through a matter of willingness and feels that you can’t die yet. It is a habit since beginningless time. It is a habit that is spontaneous, very naturally allowing you to be swirled into this karma. You can’t do without this or that and be obsessed with the perceived important things in life. Because of all the involvements with the immediate things on hand, you will not think about practicing at all. And this is the source of all deterioration.

[38A, 3.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P174 L12]

This just triggered one of my memories. When I just got ordained, I was following my guru. That was

extremely wonderful! During that three years, there was no socializing, not a single socializing. Now I realized it was extremely wonderful beyond words. You should not be involved in such socialization. Once we get involved, we do not know when will the implication ends. He pays a visit to you once and you return the favor by visiting him. I have now realized the best way to handle this. He comes and visits you. And once that is done, it is considered over. Just like that. He sends you a gift, and it should end there. So when do you return the favor? After you develop the spirit of enlightenment and realized the enlightened spirit of enlightenment, then that is the best time to return the favor! For the Mantra vehicle, it will even be later! Only when you achieve Buddhahood, you owe them until such a time. When you have the ability to return the favor, and when you do it, others will benefit and succeed from the favor returned. If we were to return favor in our current state, then everyone will just be entangled in here together for a long time.

[38A, 5.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P175 L6]

I am not saying this is the best method. On the contrary, this is a very bad method of mine. What do I mean by this? This is because, I know I am a sentient being born in this degenerated time and is the lousiest person. I am in no position (to say anything), therefore, the only way is to shut myself up. However, if there are kindhearted persons who come by, if he wants to see you, to visit you and if there are necessary matters to attend to, then we

should do it. If not, it should end here. He may visit you once and twice and on the third time, he may stop visiting. At most, he will say this person does not know how to be sociable. Not being sociable doesn't matter. I am already a very lousy person thus, I do not know how to be sociable, so I need to learn the Dharma, connect with the Dharma, connect with Buddha's teachings that is good enough. This is how I feel now.

[38A, 5.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P175 L12]

I think many of us have such an experience before. If you had it before, this indeed has its advantage and we shall not go into it. You young people, if you really want to move up this path, one should consider and weigh this carefully. Of course there are many paths to Buddhahood. If one's main priority is to go for the practicing way, in the beginning, one shouldn't touch that non-virtuous path, do not touch it! There are special reasons for it, special skillful means for it. Therefore, we must be able to notice that there are tactful and skillful means to it. When you contemplate, you don't even know when you are going to die. The following text states, he thinks about death everyday, "today he is going to die, he is going to die tonight!" Very naturally, you will not be bothered with such matters.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 6.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P176 L4]

and the remedy for this is mindfulness of death, the source of all that is excellent.

With regards to this thought of “I will not die yet”, there must be a correct remedy. What is there to remedy? To be mindful of death, when you think about death, nothing matters anymore. This is what is truly helpful to us. All the goodness of things arises from this concept. Following,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 7.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P176 L8]

Consequently, you should not think that this is a practice for those who do not have some other profound teaching to cultivate in meditation.

Therefore, we should never say, there is no profound Dharma for meditation now. We should meditate this. On the contrary, regardless of whichever profound Dharma to meditate on, without this foundation, no matter how profound the Dharma you are meditating on, all these are without the foundation. Not only that, take a look at all the other complete teachings, they will always have this as a foundation. Therefore, true complete teachings' outline will definitely include this. We should really understand this point. When we look at the outline, do not just read it once and hurriedly go straight into the later profound teachings before connecting with the earlier teachings. Under such circumstances, if any profound teachings are just for us to develop some affinity, this is such a huge waste. Do give special attention to this, special attention to this! We must understand that this is absolutely essential in our meditation in order to progress. On the other hand, if you have

successfully meditated on mindfulness of death, you should not have any fear later.

[38A, 8.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P177 L3]

Now this is very clear. India's first greatest person, Master Atisha whose teachings later spread to Tibet and even through many great accomplishments, without any exception, he placed great emphasis on this point. Let's think about it, are we better than him? Assuming that you are better than him, yes, you don't wish to and simply do not want to learn this. But if you are not better than him, then we should humbly learn from him first. Therefore, my suggestion to everyone: Currently, we do not necessarily need to say that oh, I'm cultivating some profound teachings that take priority or to rush into reading up on important books. If we cannot cultivate this important concept, then sorry, no matter how great is the teaching or how good this thing is, this will take us to a longer route, a waste of life, a waste of life! And once this non-virtuous habit is cultivated, you do not know when we are able to turn back.

[38A, 10.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P177 L10]

Therefore, the only immediate method is to understand this concept and meditate. What to meditate on? That is, turn around all our past non-virtuous habits. Oh, this will require some strength! Although we may be able to understand it today, the moment you close your book, we may be led away by our old habits again, this is very important! Therefore,

whether it is Master Tsong-Kha-Pa's 'The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment' or other teachings, the foundation stages are all similar. This concept will always be placed at the beginning. This is the foundation, which we must all understand. Following,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 10.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P178 L1]

Nor should you think that although this is something worthy of meditation, you should cultivate it just a little at the beginning of the mediation session because it is not suitable for continuous practice.

To further elaborate, "it is a must to cultivate. However, some people feel that at the beginning, they just cultivate a bit in a casual manner and not cultivating it constantly". Again it is wrong! It is very important to stabilize the foundation in the beginning. Once the foundation is stable, whenever we cultivate, the first thing is to recall it just a little. What does this mean? It means, once you have stabilized the foundation, whenever you recall it the next time and because you have done it before, the moment you recall on mindfulness of death, the whole concept will arise. I have actually seen this true practitioner before. Under normal circumstances, you can't find him. Only in times of need, you get to see him. After exchanging just a few words, he immediately recalls Impermanence: no one knows when death comes knocking on our door. The moment he thinks about death, you can feel it. He will have a certain facial

expression and his tears will start to fall. He will then stop talking and quickly get busy with his own things. What does this show? It shows that he has a very stable accomplishment, just like that. This is why at any point of time, the moment he recalls on death, he will put down everything on hand. Nothing bothers him anymore and he will continue to cultivate his own, ignoring any necessary social interaction required from him.

[38A, 12.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P178 L12]

Everyone who is present here, think about it, if you have the experience like him, would you still be afraid about not being able to succeed? Therefore, right now, we need to accept that we are ignorantly confused. We do not meditate on the most crucial thing, yet we are always busy with meditating on profound teachings. Saying this book belongs to the teachings of the Mantra Vehicle, in actual fact, it applies to the Perfection Vehicle too. There is no exception. Not only it is a must to meditate on the Mahayana path, it also applies to the Hinayana vehicle. It is all stated clearly. We say we must remove this great fire of impermanence. At which level of anxiety should we feel? It is as if our head is on fire, we will still ignore it and continue to concentrate on meditating because that is more crucial! Therefore, regardless of whether it's from the Hinayana vehicle to the Mahayana vehicle or to the Mantra vehicle, they are all similar. If we say it in the reverse order, similarly, when practising the Mantra Vehicle, usually for some of us and those who are

slightly better, they may not proceed to practise the profound teachings immediately as they will say the four performances are necessary. The four performances are necessary; and what is the preparation prior to practice of the four performances? It is this — the life of leisure and opportunities, rapidness of impermanence, these things. All these are the foundations to be built up step by step. This is why it is important to emphasize here: regardless of which Dharma teachings you are practicing, if you do not succeed in practicing and sustaining on this part while instead, busy yourself with the later part, you have walked the wrong path, walked the wrong path. Now that we understand this concept and we know that the first step is the most crucial, we do not rush into practice first, but understand the whole overview of the learning path in compliance with our ability, follow the stages and gradually move our way up. And this is truly,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 13.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P179 L8]

Rather, be certain from the depths of your heart that it is necessary in the beginning, middle, and end, and then cultivate it in meditation.

With regards to the mindfulness of death, from the beginning, middle and end, it is necessary to "be certain from the depths of your heart". In other words, we must be very serious in understanding this concept. With this right understanding, meditate more deeply in accordance with the Dharma, meditate until the concept of death is able to rise in

accordance, then you do not have to worry about anything else. There will be a very strong push factor that doesn't allow you to have any room for laxity. This concept is very clear and understandable. Now we know, ah, the faults of not cultivating mindfulness of death and the excellent benefits of this teaching.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 14.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P180 L1]

3' The kind of mindfulness of death you should develop

How do we develop mindfulness of death? Let's take a look.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P147; 38A, 14.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P180 L3]

For those who have not practiced the path at all, the fear of death manifests itself as the worry that they will be separate from their relatives and so forth. This fear is caused by their strong attachment.

When we talk about practicing mindfulness of death, although for some who have cultivated the path, the moment they think about death, they are all nervous and heart wrenched about it. When they think about dying soon, dying soon means not being able to obtain all the immediate mundane things anymore, they will definitely feel fearful. This is very wrong! It should not be this way. We are usually very attached to the mundane things. The above "relatives" and "so forth" include what we are attached to at present

and the perceived good things. We have always been busy with those and once we think about death and soon to be separated from all these, we become fearful. Therefore, this causes fear in us. And we must understand that this fear in us is wrong! Very wrong! When we are told to be mindful of death, there is a correct method of doing so. It is not merely thinking about death all the time and when you think about death, you feel fearful about it. This should not be the way. So how should it be?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38A, 16.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P180 L12]

Therefore, do not develop this here. What, then, should you develop?

The above text tells us how to develop mindfulness of death. Let's take a closer look at the concept stated below.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38A, 16.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P181 L1]

Certainly nothing of your body, which you appropriated through karma and afflictions, shall survive death.

Where does our current body come from? Because of ignorance and compositional activity. Ignorance is afflictions. The effect of this contaminated body is resulted from the increased progression of afflictions and karma. Under any circumstances, it has to die and has no way to escape from death. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38A, 17.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P181 L5]

This may frighten you, yet, for the time being, you cannot stop it.

It is useless to be afraid! Because this body is the effect of non-virtuous karma appropriated through afflictions and karma. This effect body is definitely appropriated through the cycling phenomena of dependent arising. Therefore, it has absolutely no way of escaping death. As such, whether you are afraid or not, you have no choice. So, what should we know now? The following says,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38A, 18.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P181 L9]

However, you should fear death if you have not secured your welfare in future lives by putting an end to the cause of the miserable realms and establishing the causes of high status and certain goodness.

The following is what we should really be afraid of. We now understand that this life passes by swiftly and we would die immediately after this life. After we die, those we love and the things that are close to us will be lost. This is unimaginable. But there is one thing that we can do. What is it? We can make use of this life to either plant and accumulate all kinds of virtues or to commit all kinds of non-virtuous karma. Due to the non-virtuous karma committed, it will send us to the three miserable realms to suffer in future. As for virtuous karma committed, it allows us to

become heavenly beings or even be reborn in the Pure Land. Therefore, what we should truly fear are the causes of non-virtuous karma that have not been eradicated. This is what we should be afraid of. We should also fear that the causes of higher status have not been cultivated. This is what we truly should be anxious about.

[38A, 19.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P182 L6]

Therefore, mindfulness of death is to motivate us: Since this human life ends so quickly, there is nothing that we can bring along with us after death except for the karma that we have committed. And this karma determines our future, whether we rise or fall. Thus, at this juncture, we should contemplate what is really important and what to be anxious about. If we do not cultivate while we are living, this is what we should be fearful of. We should fear that the seeds of the non-virtuous karma are not repented and eradicated fully and that the seeds of virtuous karma have not been cultivated and continue to be accumulated. It will be scary when these have not been accomplished before death. Therefore, this is what we really should be fearful about.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38A, 20.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P182 L11]

If you consider your fear about this, it is within your power not to be frightened at the moment of death because there are things you can do to secure your future welfare.

If you do not act on these things, you will be tormented by regret at the time of death, in general fearing that you will not be liberated from cyclic existence and in particular fearing that you will fall into a miserable realm.

Well, yes ah! Since we understood this, we can practice while we are still living. After we have practiced so that at the time of death, there will not be any fear because we have already accumulated the virtuous karma and eradicated the non-virtuous karma too. What is there to be fearful about? If we have not done so yet, then we should be afraid. This is truly what we should be fearful about. Therefore, the following text tells us, to be truly fearful is categorized into two parts, general and specific. Under the general aspect, we have not liberated from cyclic existence. Under the specific aspect, we could fall into miserable realms during this cyclic existence. This is what we should be fearful about. If you have cultivated well, that when we talk about death, that after death, you will go to the Pure Land, not only will you not be afraid, in fact you can't wait to die earlier! In this samsara world, it is extreme suffering as there are many things, this cannot do and that cannot do. If I can go to the Pure Land to enjoy happiness now which I think no one is an exception, telling you, "So and so, you just have to wait for another two more days". You will get impatient. Even waiting till tomorrow is a long wait. You will wish that once you close your eyes, Amitabha Buddha will come and fetch you immediately. There is no fear of death at all. Do not be afraid. To be truly fearful is to

fear that there is no cultivation before death. This is to be comprehended.

[38A, 22.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P183 L9]

No, this is not to say that after cultivating mindfulness of death, you become fearful when you think about death. It is for you to contemplate whether you have cultivated in accordance with the Dharma before your death. Because you have cultivated, then you will be happy when death comes. This is the true meaning of mindfulness of death. The following,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38A, 23.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P183 L12]

The Garland of Birth Stories:

Though you hold fast, you cannot stay.

What benefits is there

In being frightened and scared

Of what cannot be changed.

***Thus, when you analyze the nature of the world,
Humans are regretful at death because they have
sinned***

And have not brought forth virtuous actions.

***They worry about sufferings to come in future
lives***

And the fear of dying clouds their minds.

***However, I do not know of anything I have done
That would make me regretful,***

And I have made myself accustomed to virtuous actions.

Why should anyone who abides in the teaching fear death?

The following statement states: you must understand that there is nothing we can do to save our human life, not even under any circumstances, and no matter how hard you try to keep it. Death comes just like that. There is nothing you can do to save it. Nothing helps, even if you go to the doctor. There is this saying that medicine can only cure sicknesses that do not result in death. If your life span is up, then medicine is of little use.

[38A, 24.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P184 L5]

I remember back then a case study cited in the “Record on Karma and Reincarnation”. While this happened after the era of the Republic, the matter is still relevant today. In Beijing, there was this hospital called Harmony Hospital. It was one of the most prestigious hospitals in the mainland then. At that time, the hospital had a German doctor who was the most brilliant German doctor during the pre-war times. There was a person who had appendicitis and was sent to the hospital. Now, appendicitis is a minor illness, but during those times, it was a serious illness. Now, you can have antibiotics and so on, and you are not afraid of inflammation as it can be cured with just an injection. At that time, there wasn’t such a thing. Appendicitis will slowly lead to Peritonitis, and by then, there will not be any cure at all. When

the patient was sent to the hospital, the doctor after his examination said, “sorry, please go home”. There was nothing the doctor could do, not even the best doctor could cure him. His family, for example, his wife made supplications to the Bodhisattvas and Buddha. Later, the family sought help from a great master named Di Xian or another master, and made wishes. Ah, finally to one’s surprise, it was said that a departed spirit had come to demand his debt. At that time, the accomplished monk was present and said: “there is no end to revenge”. In the end, the accomplished monk promised to perform a ritual for the departed spirit [e.g. redeeming the lost souls by making offerings and saying prayers]. After the ritual, the departed spirit said, “well, good, good, since I have received the accomplished monk’s help through the ritual today, our debt shall end here.” And there was no more demand for the debt.

[38A, 26.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P185 L2]

So after the agreement, in other words, the matter was settled and resolved! At that time, what had happened to the patient then? The patient was originally sent to the hospital, had the best German doctor at the Harmony Hospital for his appendicitis. I remember when I was young, I knew of a classmate who had such illness too. At that time, it was known that nine out of ten patients with such illness would die, unless it was discovered early. [In this patient’s case,] his appendix had already decayed, his illness had become Peritonitis. Even now, there is no cure for it, needless to say in the past. In the end, the

patient was sent home. Eh, after he was sent home, unexpectedly, through the monk's reconciliation, when he reached home and everyone thought nothing could be done anymore, he flipped open the blanket and said he was hungry and wanted some porridge. Everyone was so relieved and happy. He was able to stand up after having porridge for two days. He returned to the hospital. The German doctor was bewildered and asked, "who has cured you?" and he replied, "no one". "This is absolutely unbelievable, absolutely not possible, and there is no such thing!" At that time, this caused a sensation for a while in Beiping [now Beijing]. The reason I tell you this case study is because doctors can only cure sicknesses that do not result in death. When illness due to negative karma come, there is no way to think of a cure for it. Thus, when death arrives, nothing can stop it.

[38A, 27.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P185 L13]

So when we think of this and truly understand death, what should be done? It's not about being fearful of death, but rather by then, nothing can be done as death comes very quickly. Therefore, you have to think fast before death comes; see what you have done, for those things you should not do, stop it immediately. Strive hard and quickly work on those things that you ought to do. Thus, he told us, observe the mundane world. If we have committed sins, we will be regretful in future. Also, when virtuous karma has not been created and planted, under such circumstances, we will suffer when death

comes. Thus, we must stop doing that immediately! Thus, during your lifetime, if you can do all kinds of virtuous deeds, white and pure deeds and after doing, you know very clearly that after the end of this life, you will gain higher status rebirth and finally attain ultimate happiness. What fear is there? What to fear?

[38A, 28.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P186 L6]

For instance, let's take this place as an example. Say, you are not allowed to live here anymore. You have to leave. You will feel that your future is full of uncertainty if you leave this place. You do not know where to go! At that time, alas, you will be extremely regretful. Another way is to say that this place will have a great disaster in the future or perhaps this place will become a slum district. Now, a very good house has been built in that place. You are not allowed to live here but to move to that place. Oh, everyone will scramble to that place. No one thing in this mundane world is an exception. But this kind of thing is passive, and as for dharma, we understand everything is Karma.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38B, 00.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P187 L1]

The Four Hundred Stanzas:

Those who think with certainty, "I will die," Give up fear.

Therefore, How could they fear even the Lord of Death?

We should understand, in the end, we cannot escape from death. If you have a firm understanding of this concept and practice in accordance with the Dharma, you will be able to eradicate your non-virtuous karma and meditate on your virtuous causes. Then there is nothing to be fearful! Why are you fearful of death then? This is the true understanding on “mindfulness of death”.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38B, 1.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P187 L5]

Thus, when you contemplate impermanence again and again, you think, “I will undoubtedly separate from my body and resources soon,” and you stop the craving that hopes not to leave them.

Therefore, you should consistently put the concept of mindfulness of death in our mind. What is the benefit of this then? Regardless of any immediate good benefits, upon death, are they of any use? Ah, regardless if they are your wife, your fortune, your children or good fortune, they are all your beloved. Before your death, everyone already starts thinking. “When this old man dies, how much of his fortune will I inherit?” Under such circumstances, upon your death, if they cry for a while, that is still considered not bad. If your deceased body has yet to turn cold and they are already fighting amongst themselves in lawsuits. Oh my goodness! I have no idea what are we busy for? This is the truth! Therefore, there isn’t a single thing externally and regardless of how much money you have saved in your bank, these monies are adding fuel to the fire that lead you to the three miserable realms.

[38B, 2.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P188 L5]

As for our human body, in comparative thoughts, the past practitioners are really great! Now everything that we have is so convenient and accessible, we still talk about malnutrition! Yesterday, a venerable came to discuss with me about a matter, I then thought of a case study which event happened about 10 years ago. America is a place that emphasizes a lot on nutrition. At that time, there was a manager in America Buddhist Association who has great future prospects, everyone thinks highly of him. And what was the cause of his death? His cause of death was not known, no one knew the reasons behind his death. However, before he died, he was sick for a long time. His doctor was sought and seemed he was diagnosed with nutrition overdose. Let me tell you, this is a true story, I will never lie to you!

[38B, 3.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P188 L11]

Go and observe, there are many people who committed the same error now. No harm asking the older folks, including our senior Venerable. Up till today, my mother, the year before last, I went back to pay her a visit, she doesn't even have any teeth but she consumes two bowls of white rice daily even though her teeth can't bite and is already eighty years old. Now, take a look at yourself. Asking you to just eat two bowls of white rice, you will complain! You will rant that although the vegetables are slightly better now, the nutrition is still not good enough and in the morning, there will be no energy, this is absurd! Such a misconception! Everyone is a practitioner. If you want to work hard and improve, yet you are still concerned about this, this is the route to hell. Let me tell you, I am definitely not making empty talks here! All of you should flip open your Ethical Discipline sutra, turn to the page on learning the Dharma,

which person tells you to pay attention to nutrition and focus on our body? There is no such thing! Therefore, I briefly touched on this portion here. What is this? This is caused by the erroneous views of our afflictions. What does the afflictions that are related to our views consist of? The reifying view of the perishing aggregates is first, an extremist view, a belief in the supremacy of wrong views, a belief in the supremacy of ethics and religious discipline and then wrong view. This is a belief in the supremacy of wrong views which causes this problem. I will briefly touch on this portion here too.

[38B, 4.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P189 L6]

Even though you have managed to really cure it, even though your sickly body is cured, when it is time to die, is there any use? If the body really depends on nutrition only, then the law of karma is of no use at all, this is the truth! Therefore, for Dharma practitioners, if one does not grasp the core concepts of the Dharma and instead busy oneself with such matter [e.g. nutrition], this is totally absurd. When we first start, I will not require everyone to change immediately. If I do that, it would be wrong. However, you must recognize that your concept is wrong. On the basis of this misconception, repent on it diligently, this is what is important. If one is obstinately attached to this misconception, then the most fundamental basis of practicing the Dharma is wrong. Therefore, be mindful that the “body and resources” and so forth will be gone very quickly. By that time, you will “stop the craving” that hopes not to leave them. Thus, the words “cannot let go” have totally no lingering effect on you.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38B, 5.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P189 L14]

Consequently, you will not fear death out of the distress of leaving.

As you have abandoned the craving for the immediate things, what is there to be fearful of death? Of course, there is nothing to be fearful of. Now we want to cultivate the Dharma, we should cultivate this. As for this actual mindfulness of death, what is the true content to cultivate? It is this. This is what we should understand. After understanding the principle, the following tells us how to be mindful of death. When you follow the sequence, you will very naturally, base on the principle explained above, be able to develop its quality accordingly. It becomes a strong driving force for you to move up step by step. Therefore, the Tibetan Elders have a phrase “Be slow and steady in your practice, you will achieve more at a faster pace. When you base your practice on a firm foundation, you will reach the peak”. Do not be impatient, practice slowly then you will achieve your goal more quickly. Our current state is that we wish to make haste but are unable to do so in the end. Furthermore, practicing from the foundation will naturally lead you to the peak. If the foundation is done properly, you will naturally progress. But for us now, we do not want to cultivate from the foundation but impatiently seek to practice at a higher level. Oh, I am now meditating on something and when in that state, I do something. There is no foundation. Thus, after spending much time on it, there is no result. Now, let’s take a look on how to cultivate mindfulness of death.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P148; 38B, 7.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P190 L11]

4' How to cultivate mindfulness of death

Cultivate this by way of the three roots, nine reasons, and three decisions.

With regards to cultivating mindfulness of death, it is divided into 3 main categories. Every category is further divided into 3 sub-divisions to form a total of 9 segments. As such, there are 3 types of decisions: Decision is what determination is about. In another words, after understanding the content, it is dependent on one's determination to cultivate in this manner accordingly. Therefore, these 3 categories are from the 3 roots. The first one,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 8.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P191 L1]

The three roots are:

1. Death is certain

2. The time of death is uncertain; and

3. At the time of death nothing helps except religious practice.

All else are of no benefit.

It is easy to understand the above topic at a glance. However, when it comes to the actual practice, it goes like this. The first root "Death is certain". This seems like not a problem at all but it has its own method of doing so! The second root is contemplating the time of death is uncertain and death will come anytime. Nobody is able to assure us that today or tomorrow, I will not die. The third root is to contemplate at the time of death nothing helps except

religious practice. Other things will only bring us harm and no benefits. Now let's take a look, under "Death is certain".

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 9.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P191 L7]

1" The contemplation that the Lord of Death will definitely come, and therefore cannot be avoided

We must understand that Death will definitely come.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 9.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P191 L9]

No matter what kind of body you assume at birth, death comes.

There is no way to avoid or stop death. Regardless of the kind of body one possesses, death will come eventually. We must be very clear about this and understand this is the truth before us. If there are people who are immortal, we should be able to see such people around us. However, there isn't a single person who exists around us who doesn't die. Never before! Buddha – Buddha has passed away, Jesus – Jesus has passed away, Mohammed - Mohammed (Allah) has passed away, Confucius is also not around anymore no matter which religion or any noble persons, not even doctors. Sorry! There aren't any of them who still lived on. The bones are reduced to ashes. Even the ashes are no longer around. This is the reality.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 10.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P192 L3]

The Collection of Indicative Verses:

If all the buddhas, and their Pratyekabuddha and sravaka disciples left their bodies, What can be said about ordinary beings?

Regardless of whether it is Buddha, the Pratyekabuddha or the Sravakas, they are all noble beings. They have left their bodies. How about us? Is it possible? Of course, we have to leave our bodies too. As for the place of staying,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 10.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P192 L6]

No matter where you stay, death comes. The same text says:

No matter where you stay, not a single place is of any exception to escape death. The same text says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 11.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P192 L8]

Somewhere to live that is unharmed by death—

Such a place does not exist.

It does not exist in space, it does not exist in the sea, Nor if you stay in the midst of mountains.

There is not a single place that can be hidden from and not a single place that death doesn't exist. Ah, absolutely not! It does not exist in the space or in the sea, not even in the midst of the mountains.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 11.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P192 L11]

Death's destruction of living beings is no different at any point in the past or future.

Let's look at the mundane world, this is true for all sentient beings, not a single living being is exceptional. In the end, the Lord of Hades will come after you.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 11.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P193 L1]

The same text says:

The wise know that all

Who have come and will come perish,

Leave this body, and go to the next life. Therefore, be sure to engage in pure behavior by abiding in the teaching.

Regardless of those who have come into this world or the future living beings to be born, the eventual destination is death. People who are truly wise will understand this characteristic and know that since death is certain, there is only one thing to do. They will be sure to engage in practice diligently accordance to the teachings before death comes!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P149; 38B, 12.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P193 L6]

You do not escape by fleeing from death, nor can you turn death away by such things as mantras. The Advice to the King Sutra (Rajavavadaka) says:

For example, four great mountains from the four directions – being hard, firm, solid-cored,

indestructible, unsplittable, with-out fissures, extremely resilient, and massed into one – rise up into the sky and destroy the earth. All the grasses, trees, trunks, branches, leaves, and all sentient beings, living beings, and creatures are crushed to dust. When these mountains come, it will not be easy to quickly run away, or to turn them away with force, wealth, magic substances, mantras, or medicine. Great King, in the same way, these four frights come, and it is not easy to quickly run away, or to turn them away with force, wealth, substances, mantras, or medicine.]

According to the sutra mentioned above, it's like the four great mountains. That great mountain usually represents the mightiest amongst all the mountains. In actual fact, we are made up of four elements. We cannot afford to have any one of these four deteriorate. These great mountains are extremely hard and indestructible. If they come crashing upon us, what is there for us to stop them? Nothing can be used to block them. These words are very easy to understand theoretically thus we shall not go into detail. When this frightful experience comes, it is just like birth, aging, sickness and death. You have no means of resisting it.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 13.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P194 L2]

What are the four? They are aging, sickness, death, and decay.

These are the four. The moment a life occurs, the final destination outcome will be this. There might not be aging or sickness but death is definite.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 14.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P194 L5]

Great King, aging comes and destroys youth, sickness comes and destroys health, decay comes and destroys all that is excellent, and death comes and destroys life. It is not easy to quickly run away from them, or to turn them away with force or wealth, or to quell them with substances, mantras, or medicine.

There is no means of resisting.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 14.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P194 L8]

Ga-ma-pa (Ka-ma-ba) said, “Now we should be frightened by death. At the time of death we should be fearless. But we are the opposite – we are not afraid now and at the moment of death we dig our fingernails into our chests.”

The great practitioner tells us that this is truly the essence. After one has cultivated on mindfulness of death, what kind of characteristic should we have? Be fearful of death now; death will come anytime. As we understand about death, we will fear death and do whatever it takes to cultivate desperately. When death comes, you will be happy. We have seen many such great practitioners that when death comes, they are so peaceful. Great! Since countless eons, this body of suffering is now forsaken and I take my leave. This is the typical case. Therefore, though we are fearful now but when death comes, we will not be fearful.

[38B, 15.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P195 L2]

What is our current situation now? It is the opposite. “We are not afraid now” Now we are not frightened of anything, I don’t care! Act heroic and brave. At the moment of death, we “dig our fingernails into our chests”, ah ya, screaming for help, it is too late already! Therefore, we shouldn’t be acting heroic now. “You are wrong, I am right.” If we say so, we are already on the wrong track! Always self-reflect, when we feel that others are in the wrong, we are already in the wrong ourselves. We must be aware of this. This is the root of our afflictions. What is the core of the Dharma? “Self” is the root. “I am right” Sorry, you are already in the wrong. We must understand this. We will talk more about this later on and will not be touching much on this now. The moment you contemplate on mindfulness of death, you will not sit here and take things easy. This is a very important point and we need to understand this. Following,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 16.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P195 L10]

2” The contemplation that our lifetime cannot be extended and constantly diminishes

The Descent into the Womb Sutra says:

Currently, if we protect our bodies well in order to live comfortably, we will live, at the longest, one hundred years or a little more.

Thus, the maximum is no more than this. Even though it may be possible to live this long, the time until death passes very quickly.

Let's continue. This portion is categorized into three main roots. Every category is further divided into three topics. Earlier, we contemplated on death is certain. This is the first one. Under the three main roots, the first is the Lord of Death will definitely come, and therefore cannot be avoided. The second one is that, not only will death will definitely come, our lifetime cannot be extended and constantly diminishes. This is what we should understand in the second point. Some people say "There are people who went through cultivation and thus increase their life span". That is right, after cultivation, the life span will indeed be extended, therefore, we are reminded to be mindful of death. After being mindful, you will cultivate desperately, only then, you can increase your life span. If you are not mindful of death, will your life span be extended? It will be impossible. If you truly understand the essence of cultivation, you may not even want to extend your lifetime. Why bother extending a lifetime in this mundane world? After practicing, you can go to the Pure Land. This is eternal happiness which is much at ease and unrestrained.

[38B, 16.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P196 L6]

Regardless of where the progress of our practice is extended, it all went through mindfulness of death that creates the outcome. If you do not understand this concept, may I ask, will the lifetime be extended? Definitely impossible. It will definitely not be extended. On the contrary, what will it be? Every moment of your life span is being reduced ah! Therefore, it quoted the sutra as above,

"The Descent into the Womb Sutra says:

Currently, if we protect our bodies well in order to live comfortably, we will live, at the longest, one hundred years or

a little more.” It states, if we are able to protect our bodies very well, at most we will live until one hundred years. *“Thus, the maximum is no more than this.”* The longest is as such. The following phrase is of essence. When we see it, we should feel heart wrenched! *“Even though it may be possible to live this long, the time until death passes very quickly.”* Even if you can live up till a hundred years old, but the journey in-between moves very quickly, very quickly!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 19.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P196 L13]

A year is consumed with the passage of months; months with the passage of days; and days with the passage of day and night, also with such periods of time as a morning, etc. Thus, few of us reach the expected life span of one hundred years,

Time passes really quickly and our life span continuously reduces. If we do not observe, we will not notice it. If we spend some time and look closely, isn't this the case? When you are contemplating, every minute of our life passes and moves forward. You can ask other things to stop, however, you can never say “Let me stop for a moment and let the lifetime be extended longer by another second.” This is impossible. This is looking at it in a micro way. Looking at it in a macro manner, it seems like this, we will usually say “Every additional year to heaven's age is an addition to human's age”, this is really absurd, really absurd! As the day passes, the lifetime decreases. As we live for another day, our life span decreases by one day. Yet we say the life span increases by the day, this is totally absurd!

[38B, 20.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P197 L7]

Let's go further in detail. I believe everyone will be able to experience this regardless of whether you are twenty, thirty or forty years old. Think back a year ago, ten years ago, it just seems like the present! From then and returning back to the present now, doesn't it seem just like a moment ago? This life is just as quick as a moment. May I ask in these ten years, what have you done? If you continue this way, what else can you do? Yet, we can actually sit around and be nonchalant about it now! This is the time to cultivate. When asked to practice, you feel that you cannot do without this and that, you will say, hold on for a while, you feel lethargic because you haven't had breakfast in the morning. After meals, laxity and distraction set in, you cannot concentrate and therefore, you can't practice as well. When such a thing happens, this is due to not understanding the true essence of the Buddha's teachings. Hence, this lifetime is always decreasing.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 21.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P198 L1]

for much of our life span seems to be finished already, and what remains cannot be extended even for a moment. Life diminishes day and night without a break.

By observing the current situation, much of our lifetime has already been consumed. The remaining lifetime, sorry, not much left either. It cannot be extended even for a moment. But it is diminishing every second without a break in the day and night. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 22.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P198 L5]

***Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds:
This life is constantly lost
Day and night without a pause,
And there is nothing which can extend it.
Why should death not come to someone like me?]***

How can I not die? The above simply tells us, this is what we should truly contemplate upon.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 22.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P198 L7]

Contemplate this with many examples.

Contemplate this with many examples. If you can reflect from different perspectives, this metaphor means using these immediate examples to concordantly contemplate. The following tells us,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 22.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P198 L10]

When weaving cloth, weavers use no more than one piece of thread on each pass, yet they quickly finish weaving the cloth.

Just like weaving cloth, it seems like weavers use no more than one piece of thread on each pass, yet they quickly finish weaving the cloth. Or,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 22.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P198 L12]

When animals such as sheep are led to slaughter, they move closer to death with every step they take.

When sheep are led to the slaughter house, we are similar to them. With every step we take, we are moving closer to death.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P150; 38B, 23.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P199 L3]

The water carried by the current of a strong river or the water in a waterfall on a steep mountain quickly disappears. Just as in these examples, your life quickly spent and gone. Just as when herdsmen pick up their sticks, their livestock helplessly follow them home, so sickness and aging lead you helplessly into the presence of the Lord of Death.

It is the same, we are also like that. We have no control over aging and sickness which will bring us to the presence of the Lord of Death. With regard to what was said earlier,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 23.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P199 L7]

In this way, meditate on the certainty of death from many perspectives.

Meditate diligently. This is what we truly should be working hard on.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 23.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P199 L9]

The Collective of Indicative Verses:

***For example, just as when weaving a cloth
You reach the end
By weaving individual courses,
So too is human life.***

It is as when we are weaving a cloth, you reach the end of the thread very quickly just like our lifetime.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 24.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P199 L11]

***For example, just as those who are to be killed
Come closer to the killing place
With every step they take,
So too is human life.***

Using the above metaphor of cows and sheep being led to their death step by step. It is what the Lord of Death will do to us too.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 24.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P200 L1]

***Just as the strong downward current of a river
Cannot be reversed,
So too the movement of human life
Is irreversible
Life is hard, brief,
And full of suffering.
It vanishes so quickly-
Like that written on water with a stick.
Just as livestock go home
When the herdsman raise their sticks,***

***So sickness and aging lead humans
To the Lord of Death.***

The above uses different metaphors to explain. It is very swift to move towards death. And before death, we are filled with immense great suffering! With these different metaphors, the whole idea is to motivate us to cultivate diligently. It is easy to understand the text, read through yourself. The main gist of it is to find one that we can concord with and meditate on the teachings accordingly.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 25.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P200 L7]

Furthermore it is said that the Great Elder went to the bank of a river and meditated, saying that the rippling flow of the water was good for meditation on impermanence.

It is said that Master Atisha went to the bank of a river and upon seeing the rippling flow of the river, he said “Look! This is a good and tactful way of reminding us on the meditation of impermanence. What does this means? Even a great practitioner like the Great Elder himself, due to his stable meditations, whatever he comes across, at a glance, ah, it’s impermanence! Once the mind arises, the concept of impermanence arises, he is immediately motivated to meditate! The following continues.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 25.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P200 L12]

The Extensive Sport Sutra (Lalita-vistara-sutra) also speaks of impermanence with many examples:

The three worlds are impermanent like an autumn cloud.

The birth and death of beings is like watching a dance.

The passage of life is like lightning in the sky; It moves quickly, like a waterfall.

There are many examples cited in the above sutra: The three worlds are desire realm, form realm and formless realm. Regardless of desire, form or formless realms, they are all impermanent. Just like the autumn cloud. The autumn cloud has a description known as the "ash grey dog, white cloud ash grey dog", it is ever changing. Impermanence is as quick as this. Our life and death is just like watching a show, you do not know what to expect in the next scene. Aye! It is just like a show. Our lifetime is just like lightning in the sky, one moment it flashes the next moment, it disappears. It moves quickly just like the waterfall! We need to understand it this way and meditate in accordance with the teachings.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 27.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P201 L5]

Thus, once inward reflection yields some sense of certainty about impermanence, contemplate it by applying your understanding of it to many things, for it is said that everything around us teaches impermanence.

If you can truly reflect inwardly, you will realize that everything around us exhibits impermanence. Hence, what it is important for us right now is not to see externally. What we truly need to do is to observe ourselves. We have all

contemplated wrongly presently and this is called misconception.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 27.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P201 L9]

After you reflect on this again and again, you reach certain knowledge.

Therefore, concerning all the present things, we should base on what has been said earlier, to observe and contemplate. As long as you constantly contemplate, you will reach certain knowledge. But we must “reflect on this again and again”; in constant and diligent contemplation. However, currently, we have two problems: the first type, after listening we take no action. We shall not even mention much about this type. Another type is, after some reflection, their result is as mentioned below.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P151; 38B, 28.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P201 L14]

It is not helpful to do just a little reflection and then say that nothing happened.

Some people just do a little reflection and then say “Ah ya, nothing happens”, this is of no use, of no use. As for the following, please note.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 38B, 28.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P202 L3]

As Ga-ma-pa said,

This is what the Great Elder tells us,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 38B, 28.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P202 L5]

“You say that nothing happened when you thought about it, but when did you reflect? If it was during the day, you were constantly distracted, and at night you slept. Do not lie!”

Someone said “Ah ya! You reflect for a moment, reflect on it accordingly for a moment and say nothing happened!” The Great Elder chided him “Have you contemplated? Have you reflected? When did you reflected? What did you do in the day? Hey, having laxity or distraction. When night falls, you sleep. Truth be told, you thought that you have reflected, but actually, you have not. Let’s not talk about gossips, even by sitting here, you are either distracted or having laxity. Have you really reflected? Please do not lie!” You can lie to others easily but not to yourself. Thus, we should not say “Ah ya! Nothing happens even after practicing it for the whole day!” If you really reflect for half a day, that is not too bad! But you don’t even reflect for half a day. Those who truly reflect do it for a long period of time, day and night! Therefore, nowadays, there are too many people who say, after listening to the theories, there is no way of achieving it. Have you really reflected? The above phrases come from the Great Elder’s advice. Keep the advice in your mind. If we are able to do so, then this life will be filled with hope. Let’s take a break now, we will go into details with these few phrases later.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P205 L1]

For those who truly want to practice, you should keep the words from the Great Elder in your mind and frequently use it

to motivate yourself. But take note! The motivational words from Great Elder only apply to us. We definitely shouldn't use it to berate others. When we use the words to berate others, it is completely wrong. The Great Elder told us that he has a principle: these people are already accomplished in their religious practice and are driven by compassion. The representation of compassion is just like a father whose love for his children is matchless. In order to make his children become useful someday, he will use a strict method at a point of time. Now when we berate others, it is not in this frame of mind. You should definitely be aware of the difference. Once you examine your frame of mind, the difference becomes clear and distinct. To simply mention it here: when your mental state is in accordance with afflictions and you use the teachings to berate others, you have created a big karma for yourself, an extremely big sin!

[39A, 1.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P205 L8]

Therefore, this tells us not to say: "Why is that I reflect for half a day and nothing comes out of it?" No, we did not reflect. Actually, we are in the distraction and lethargy state. Thus, as mentioned earlier, if we are distracted or lethargic and unable to apply the remedy, it indicates we have not purified our obscurations and have not accumulated the collections. There is a correct method. If you are not able to apply such remedy, then you should quickly refer to the previous chapters on how to purify obscurations and accumulate the collections. The step is very clear and distinct. We should not try to apply remedy using our own method. Currently, we have many such problems, say: "he is a Great Instructor; we must go to him quickly to seek the teaching! He is terrific!" Many people went to almost every

place to seek the teachings, but none of these are useful. Consequently, they wasted their whole life. Now that we have the complete stages of the path, if you follow the stages to move up accordingly, you will have nothing to worry about and will definitely accomplish in the end. Let's continue:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 2.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P206 L8]

At the end of this life, the Lord of Death will destroy you and you will pass into the next world. Until then, there will never be a time when your life span does not diminish, whether you are going somewhere, walking around, or lying down.

Look, not only at the end of our lifetime we die, even during the intervening life, regardless in any state, this lifetime continues to diminish and diminish. When did it start to diminish? It starts from the moment you enter the womb.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 3.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P206 L11]

Thus, starting from the moment that you enter the womb, you do not remain for even an instant, but go headlong toward the next lifetime.

Thus, starting from the moment you enter the womb, that is to say, from the moment when your projecting karma is determined, both your projecting karma and completing karma are determined. From that very moment, your lifetime keeps diminishing.....till the day you die.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 3.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P207 L1]

Therefore, even your intervening life is exclusively consumed in a procession toward death led by the messengers, sickness and aging.

This is what we must understand correctly: your intervening life is exclusively consumed by aging or sickness, which are all sufferings and preparation of death. Apart from this suffering, what else did we busy ourselves with? To relieve the suffering, we look for all kinds of things to make us happy. However, this is not happiness. This is the cause of suffering. This is to add suffering onto suffering. We busy ourselves with such things, showing that we are mistaken. Now we are already suffering, then we are thinking of eliminating a little of the suffering by busying ourselves with such things which are actually adding fuel to the fire. The correct method, seemingly like suffering now but in fact, it is to remove the ultimate cause of suffering. You suffer a little now but you will have happiness in future. This understanding is absolutely necessary in the course of our practice. Therefore, one must definitely not be under the impression that practicing as a monk is to enjoy all kinds of temporal happiness. This is non-Buddhist practice. There is absolutely no such thing in the Dharma. If after becoming a monk, you still covet for this, covet for that, being lazy etc, then it is completely wrong, completely wrong! If this robe is draped over the body, then it becomes the armour of hell, it will be extreme sufferings beyond words. We must realize this.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 5.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P207 L11]

Consequently, do not rejoice in the thought that while

you are living you are stationary and not moving toward the next lifetime.

One must definitely not think, “Now we are still alive, we have not died”, hence feeling cheerful and rejoiced, we must not do this. What is our current state like?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 5.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P207 L14]

For example, when falling from the top of a high cliff, the time of falling to earth through space is not enjoyable.

We are like falling from a high cliff and before falling to hit the earth, we still feel very happy. How on earth is there such a thing in the world? It is because we are so mistaken, so mistaken! At any time, we can fall to hit the earth and our body smashed into pieces.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 5.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P208 L3]

As cited by Candrakirti in his Commentary on the “Four Hundred Stanzas”(Catuh-sataka-tika):

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 6.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P208 L5]

***Hero of humans, beginning from the first night
Of entering a womb in this world,
One proceeds daily, without delay
Into the presence of the Lord of Death.***

The human life begins when the consciousness enters a

womb. What is it like? It's like entering the womb from the first night, henceforth, moment by moment continuously heading towards where? To death, to where Lord of Yama is.

[39A, 6.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P208 L9]

Therefore, in the end it cites the *Story for Stopping the Four Errors* , *Story for Stopping the Four Errors* said "Four Errors" refers to permanence, happiness, self, and purity.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 6.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P208 L10]

In the Story for Stopping the Four Errors it says:

Do those who fall to earth from the peak of a high mountain

Enjoy happiness in space as they are being destroyed?

If they are constantly racing toward death from the time they are born,

How can living beings find happiness in the time in between?

These passages indicate that it is certain that your death will come quickly.

If someone falls to the earth from the peak of a high mountain, his body will be surely be smashed into pieces upon reaching the ground. Absolutely, he will not say: "I have not fallen to the ground yet, so I feel very happy." We must absolutely not feel in this way. From the moment we entered the womb, we are constantly racing towards death every moment, thus, where is happiness? We must understand this point. As a result, all the above indicates clearly that death will come quickly.

[39A, 7.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P209 L3]

This is the second aspect of the main root, death is certain. The second aspect: Not only death is certain our lifetime cannot be extended, not even a little bit. In addition, the life span rapidly and constantly diminishes without interruption. What is the last third aspect?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 8.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P209 L6]

3” The contemplation of the certainty of death such that even while you are alive there is little time for religious practice.

We should understand that even while we are alive, there is little time for religious practice as we die quickly. Take a look at the sentence below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 8.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P209 L8]

Even if you could live for the longest period explained above, it would be wrong to think that you have time.

Let’s say you did not say you will die quickly. Let’s say you can live up to 100 years old. Let’s count, ah ya, I still have many more years to live. Even if it’s so by that time, do not think you have time for religious practice! Below explains why.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 8.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P209 L12]

Much of your life has already been wasted.

Much of our time has been wasted on insignificant things.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 9.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P210 L1]

Half of what is left will be spent in sleep,..

Half of what is left will be spent in sleep.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P152; 39A, 9.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P210 L3]

..and many of your waking hours will be wasted with other distractions. Further, as youth fades, the time of aging arrives. Your physical and mental strength deteriorate such that even if you want to practice religion, you lack the capacity to do so. Consequently, you have no more than a few chances to practice the teachings.

This is extremely clear, extremely clear! In reality very few live up to 100 years. If the people now can live up to 70 years old, it's considered pretty good. Given a 70-year life span, we cannot practice for the first 15 years. For us nowadays, we cannot practice for the first 20 years, neither for the ending last 15 years. This year, I am only 59 years old and already I deeply feel that [the body condition] is not as good as before. Very often what I told you earlier, I would forget at the next moment. In the past, I did not quite believe in such a thing.

[39A, 10.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P210 L10]

A few years earlier I had a classmate who was my best friend. For a few years we had lived together in the same room, got along very well. He also told me he did not know what happened to his father. At that time his father was about 80 years old and became forgetful. He just had his meal a moment ago and on putting down his bowl, he said, "I have not had my meal!" He had completely forgotten! Sometimes he ran to the street and just walked around and forgot where he had been to. Just like this, he became muddled like this! When someone becomes this way in future, can he still practice at that time? Uh, but there is one thing he will not forget: The "self" is not forgotten! Human beings are truly interesting! Sometimes he ran out, stood at the door for half a day and then wondered where was I? He did not know where he was though it seemed strange. Indeed it happened to him. All of you should not laugh. Soon it will be your turn. It's already my turn. One is useless when one becomes old.

[39A, 11.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P211 L5]

When you exclude the beginning period, the end period and the time of illness, sleep, meals and defecation, how much time do we have for religious practice in a day or in a life span of 70 years? During our cultivation in the morning session, can you cultivate? In the evening session, can you cultivate? Not to mention morning or evening sessions, when you do prostrations, are you really in practice? When you meditate, are you really in practice? Forget about the time when we fail to think. When we really do think about it, the time we use for real practice is indeed very little! Moreover, we chat with people, then we mind other people's business, until which day can you practice? None! This is what we

must understand.

[39A, 11.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P211 L11]

Therefore, we must understand the third point: do not feel we still have a lot of time and wait till the later. We cannot wait! If you are able to utilize every moment for practice, this is good! it has taught us the method in the beginning. Indeed, when you are able to grasp the concept, we already have a method how to be in practice for 24 hours a day. If you are unable to grasp this concept, this lifetime, even 100 years, is also wasted, even 1000 years is of no use. Our life span is actually longer than 1000 years! Without any exception, immeasurable eons had passed and we are still in the cyclic existence. This is the true situation, which we must reflect with intense sorrow. Therefore, the period we can truly practice is very little, truly very little!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 12.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P212 L2]

The Descent into the Womb Sutra says:

Moreover, half of the one-hundred-year life span is covered by sleep. Ten years are childhood. Twenty years are old age. Sorrow, lamentation, physical suffering, mental discomfort, and agitation take up time.

Mental discomfort, physical suffering, or agitation, all these things wasted our life away. Therefore, if we still want to mind other people's business, it will be our greatest loss! Nothing can surpass this loss greater than this. It is not that we do not mind other's business but the question is till when? It is the right time when you have developed the spirit of

enlightenment and true compassion to help others! That is the right time!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 12.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P212 L4]

Many hundreds of different physical illnesses also consume your time.

Then our body has many different physical illnesses which can take our lives away at any time.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 13.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P212 L11]

The Story for Stopping the Four Errors says:

In this time of one-hundred-year life spans even the longest of human lives is finished in only one hundred years. Of that, the beginning and end are made useless by youth and old age. Things like sleep and sickness destroy all hope for practice, leaving no time for it. How much remains to the life span of a being born among humans, who live in happiness?

It tells us that our life span at most is only one hundred years. Of that, at the beginning of youth, we were playful and did not know how to practice; how about old age? No capability, so it is wasted; for the period in between, things like sleep and sickness take up time. Therefore, the time of really staying in peace and happiness and be able to practice is very little, very little.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 14.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P213 L3]

Furthermore, Chay-ga-wa said that if you subtract from sixty years the time you lose to food and clothing, sleep, and sickness, not more than five years are left to devote to the teachings.

Assuming that a person's life span is sixty years, the time being really devoted to the teachings is not more than five years, even for a true practitioner! For our cases, it is already amazing if we can really practice for five years. However, we are not there yet, because most of the time, we are in afflictions and not in accordance with practice. This is the third point.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 15.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P213 L7]

This being the case, the wonders of this life will be mere memories at the time of death, like waking up and remembering the pleasurable experiences in a single dream.

Even, in this life, if everything is as wonderful as what we wish in this life, at the time of death, how much of those wonders are left behind? Surprisingly, it will be "mere memories" in your mind. It is just like our past memories, although every one of us has this experience, even we have not yet died. Everybody should have such an experience. For instance, when we recollect the past, what does the past become now? Mere memories! Just like an empty remembrance, whether good or bad. No matter how wonderful it was, is it of any true value to you? Not a bit at all.

[39A, 15.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P213 L13]

What is this situation like? It is just like in a dream, a pleasurable experience in a dream; upon waking up, it seems there is such a thing but in fact, there is nothing at all. Is it worth busying yourself over such stuff at all? It is not worthy. If being busy in vain leaves some remaining memories, it's still fine. Though it really leaves some remaining memories; but in truth, this results in sending you to the three miserable realms to receive endless great sufferings! Is it worth it? This is what we should realize. Therefore, at the time when we are still alive, strive immediately!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 16.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P214 L4]

Think, “If the enemy, death, is surely approaching and cannot be stopped, why should I delight in the delusions of this life?”

This is the conclusion. Since death is our great death, it will surely come. You absolutely have no power and no any other means to stop it. Since this is the case, at the time of death, what is left after you have busied yourself in this life?” Just an empty thought in a dream. Once you understand this, would you still be deluded? Therefore, it had repeatedly tells us, this is self-deception is no more than in its worst form!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 17.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P214 L9]

Then decide that you must practice the teaching and

make many heartfelt pledges to do so.

This is the first basic principle. After the three subsections, we finally realize that we must make such a decision to do so. Once we have this understanding and contemplate accordingly, we must make a heartfelt pledge: “I must practice the teaching.” Why is it so? Because if you do not practice, no matter how wonderful it is now, what is the state like in the end? Just like a dream and, on awakening, having nothing at all. The only thing left is non-virtuous karma you have created, which sends you to hell. Think of it, it is absolutely meaningless!

[39A, 18.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P215 L1]

Therefore, after you have contemplated diligently on the earlier three things, i.e. the three subsections, you would have the correct understanding. Not only having the correct understanding but also assert resolutely: “There is no other route, I must practice the teaching, I must practice the teaching, this is the only feasible route.” However, we must pay attention to the practice at this juncture: practice must be done according to the teaching! Although now we have entered the gateway of Buddhism and want to practice the teaching, we may still go wrong. Bearing this point in the mind is critical. Entering the gateway of Buddhism is already hardship-suffer, if, after entering the gateway and we still practice incorrectly, it is double pity! This point is essential for us to know. Therefore we need to strive well, and it is the most worthwhile thing for us to take note of.

[39A, 19.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P215 L7]

Up to this point perhaps we would think: “Ah, that’s right, look, those people have gone wrong!” Once you have this idea, you are already absolutely wrong! It is not about minding others, but yourself. Secondly, are those people really wrong? You can say they are wrong or they are also not wrong at all. According to my current understanding, I do not think they are wrong and I am thankful to them. Today, we are able to sit here securely, what does it depends on? It depends on those people outside, they spread the seeds of Dharma widely to the world and people have faith in the teachings. Those people knowing that we are practitioners, come to make offerings. If not for these people, can we sit here securely to do our practice today? There is not enough time to thank them and yet you look at their mistakes, it is you that do not even know how mistaken you are. If you can only manage yourself, you must be grateful to those people. In future, when you feel you are already a Mahayana practitioner, you can make efforts to help those people at once. This is the attitude we should adopt. Therefore, if you claim: “Oh! I am correct, those people are wrong”. Then you are worse than them! Nevertheless, those people can still help you. If you behave in this way, whom are you helping?

[39A, 20.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P216 L2]

It comes to my mind now. In the past, my teacher had berated me for such thing. Now the more I think of it, the more meaningful it is. Although now I do not have the strength to berate you but there is no harm for me to repeat, like a recorder, my teacher’s words: “You feel you are in practice, but where does the food come from? Based on what reason must someone make offerings to you?” Now the more I think of it, the more meaningful it is. If you still feel

people are wrong in this way, or in that way, you must contemplate this carefully. So when you look at those people outside, you must be thankful to them. Without them, we would not be here and would not be able to reside and practice peacefully in this mountain! When you truly reflect in this way, regardless of what you do, your heart will spur you to practice. Once you understand this point, you will naturally get rid of this type of wrong concepts. This is extremely important and we must absolutely take note of this!

[39A, 21.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P216 L10]

Therefore, this is the way of practice for everyone. All great practitioners who practice accordingly said the same words. Didn't the Sixth Patriarch say it very distinctly? "A true practitioner of the Path will not look at the faults of others". If you think you are a true practitioner, you will not look at the faults of others. If you see the faults of others, you have already gone wrong, we must know this concept. Therefore, on this part, we must not misunderstand the meaning of practice the "Teachings"! Do not think in this way: we stay here practicing regularly, unlike them who act recklessly. Such thought is problematic which you must examine earnestly.

[39A, 22.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P217 L1]

All the sections below will show us the correct way. The part aforementioned is our foundation. In case you have mistaken like aforementioned, don't worry about this for the time being. You should continue to strive to learn well and naturally we will be able to correct our wrong concept one by one.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 22.43; Original
Commentary Script Vol 5, P217 L4]

The Garland of Birth Stories:

***Alas, afflicted and worldly persons,
I do not like unstable things.
Even this glorious white water lily (kumada)
Will become a memory.***

***Alas, it is amazing that you beings are fearless,
Placed in a realm like this.
You are joyous and act unworried
Though the Lord of Death blocks every path.***

***As you have the powerful, dangerous, and
unstoppable enemies
Of sickness, aging, and death,
You surely will go to a fearful place in the next life.
I wonder what thoughtful person would delight in this?***

The first part said: This worldly world is truly ignorant, truly mistaken, full of delusion! Everything in this worldly world is not solid. It (the worldly world) is simply not a lovely place. It is all void, deceit, and impermanent!] Even for this glorious white water lily celebration, which is a magnificent banquet celebration ----- regardless of how magnificent and joyous it had been, in the end, what is it like? “Memory” just like the state of awakening from a dream. It is so worthless, not solid and not secure, but the characteristic of all the beings in the three realms is as such. We are so ignorant and mistaken that we are not fearful of this. Such is truly inconceivable, truly inconceivable! In other words, we are so mistaken that we are extremely ignorant. Yama, i.e. Lord of Hell or the

“Lord of Death”, who will cut you off at the end of your life regardless of who you are, you come and leave naked. We are surprisingly not fearful of this, we even feel very joyous when placed in this realm, this is extremely mistaken!

39A, 24.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P218 L2]

Not to mention at the moment of death, we are currently plagued by sickness, aging and death. These forces are extremely powerful and nothing can stop them. And what is the end result? Death. We have to abandon everything and move on to the next life. What is the next life? You absolutely do not know. It is decided by the karma we planted in this life and we have been continuously suffering big distress in such cyclic existence. Without exception, once you understand this fact, who would still want it? No exception, you are under a delusion before you realized this; after you realized it, you will abandon the worthless and strive at once!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P153; 39A, 25.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P218 L7]

Also, the Letter to Kaniska (Maha-raja-kaniska-lekha) says:

***The ruthless Lord of Death
Murders powerful beings without purpose.
While such murder is sure to come,
What wise person would be relaxed?***

Then our lineage master tells us, the Yama, Lord of Hell will never say: I am compassionate! No, he won't! Death is this cruel and meaningless. It will destroy all of us in the end. Therefore, once a truly wise person understands this, who is

willing to be careless and relaxed?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39A, 26.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P218 L11]

***Hence, as long as that great unforgiving warrior
Has not fired the unstoppable arrow
From which there is no escape,
Strive for your own welfare.
Reflect in this way.***

What is this situation like? It is like an extremely forceful arrow, when it is shot at us, we would definitely die. This arrow is not only very forceful but also absolutely accurate. In other words, we will definitely encounter this problem. Before this arrow is released and before we are shot to death by the arrow, we should strive at once! Strive at once! This is the first principle. It is divided into three sub sections to help us engender this determination.

[39A, 27.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P219 L3]

Now we might as well revise this point again: What is the first principle? The first one, death is certain. Then not only death is certain, our life span is diminishing, and there is no means to stop the diminishing even for a moment. Moment by moment, we are led to death, just like this. This is like we are falling from the high mountain to the earth. We absolutely should not feel happy simply because we have not dropped to the ground yet! We should not feel happy, instead, we must contemplate this point earnestly and take the opportunity to practice. At the same time we must bear in mind: do not say that it is still joyful in the interim so we can take our time to practice slowly. Lastly, you must

contemplate that even if you have not died, even if you are still alive, the intervening time for practice is very little. Once you truly understand this concept, you dare not relax.

[39A, 28.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P219 L10]

With such contemplation, it will give rise to a determination and evolve into an understanding. So what is the so-called “Pledge” really about? We normally think in this manner but the force “of this thought” is superficial, not much power to it. You must follow the method mentioned before, analyze and reflect diligently, at that time a strong force will emerge and you will make a resolute pledge: “I must do it! I must do it!” Once you have this strong resolute pledge, it will propel you forward to do it seriously. Otherwise, if you listen to it without focus, you may have heard it but you just could not do it, this is such a pity. Even so, it still has benefit: once the seed is planted, sooner or later it will begin to grow and sprout. When it sprouts and grows, do remember firmly: things do not fall from the sky that you will attain Arhat or Buddhahood at once. Rather, when it sprouts and grows, you still need to do your utmost to practice vigorously. Hence we must remember: since we have to practice sooner or later, why not strive now? Why wait till later? Because if we wait till later, where will we be in the interim period? We will be in hell. This is what we must understand and then truly analyze and reflect. This matter is very important, very important.

[39B, 00.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P221 L1]

This is the first root, what is the second?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 00.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P221 L2]

b” The contemplation that the time of death is uncertain

Among the three roots, this one is the most important. The second root is about how we can analyze and contemplate that the time of death is uncertain.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 00.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P221 L5]

It is certain that death will come sometime between today and one hundred years from now;

It is certain that death will come starting from today to one hundred years. This is the longest. Death is certain.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 00.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P221 L7]

it is uncertain on which day within that period death will come.

But it is uncertain on which day within that period death will come.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 00.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P222 L1]

Therefore, for instance, you cannot determine whether or not you will die today.

Whether or not you will die today? None of us is sure that

you will not die today. How do you know you will not die today? How do you know you will not die now? If there is a big earthquake, all of us will be dead. If an airplane fails, we will die. Even just being infected with a tiny virus, you sneeze a few times and you might not wake up tomorrow.

[39B, 1.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P222 L5]

This year I am 60 years old. Exactly forty years ago, I was about twenty years old only, just slightly over 20 years old. I had just arrived and still remembered it was in Kaoshiung. At that time, I had a good friend. We were on very good terms and frequently hang out together. At that time, he was working on a ship, a merchant ship, as a third assistant with bright prospect! We had not met for two days and wondered where he was? We were looking forward to seeing him. Finally, the news came and guess what? Announcement of his demise! Do all of you know what is announcement of demise? He had died. How did he die? It was baffling with an unknown cause of death. He was about two or three years older than me. Now I cannot even remember his name. Then a few years passed, I still remember we were schooling in *Cheng Kung University*. After graduation, I had a friend who was one year junior than my class. He studied in the Department of Electrical Engineering. In school, he was a very nice person. Although he was in Department of Electrical Engineering [Translator's note: different from Master's department], we were quite good friends. Then that year, we were preparing for entrance examination for senior government service post. He was also busy. Just when all of us were preparing vigorously, one day the sister of my friend came suddenly. We felt very odd when we saw her face. Before saying anything, her tears kept flowing. What

happened? Her brother was dead! Unbelievable! There are too many of such kind of cases and all of them were just twenty years old.

[39B, 3.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P223 L1]

Then later, we start to understand one thing: why did Buddha asked us to practice at the Shi Tuo Lin cemetery? Looking at the cemetery besides us is of great help to us. When we were in Los Angeles, we frequently need to go to the cemetery to redeem lost souls (by making offerings and saying prayers). Once when we were at the cemetery redeeming the lost souls, I noticed the cemetery records show: “who this person was, the year and month he died, and when he was born.” Most of them had lived for a couple of decades. Then we moved on to another place. Upon looking, it caused me to have the jitters and until now it still left a deep impression. Most of them buried here were a few months old or few years old, very few of them over the age of three. Once I saw this, from then onwards, my concept of life and death totally changed. Today I am fifty plus years old how can I ensure I will live? Even those two or three years old have died. Then I specially took a closer look at the tombstones. There were many people who died below five years old, many from five to ten years old, many from ten years to twenty years old, and many others. All had photographs and looked lively and adorable. So, how can you determine you will not die today? Therefore, whether or not you will die today, is indeed not determined by you. For practitioners like us, what do we do then? See the next verse..

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 4.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P223 L12]

However, you must assume that you will die and should think, “I will die today.”

As a true practitioner we must take remedial action against our past errors. How do we take remedial action? Take death for instance, you must assume firmly that you will die and will die today. We should not say: Do not need to persist, do not need to discern! At present, to have no discernment is actually to be in total ignorance! The fruition of non-discursive wisdom is achieved through real practice! When one is able to attain the fruition of non-discursive wisdom, it is because he is able to persistently choose virtue and practice accordingly to achieve this level. We must be clear about this! To do so we must formally recognize and contemplate correctly to get rid of the absurd and demonic discern.

39B, 5.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P224 L4]

The practice for Bodhisattvas at first level is the Noble Eightfold Path. The most important part of which are right views and correct contemplation. Bodhisattvas at all levels still need correct contemplation, so how come we as lay persons do not need to do any thinking. We must not be this muddle-headed and must definitely pay attention to this aspect! Earlier, regarding disputing misconceptions, it was mentioned very clearly and this word has its distinct meaning. If you have not understood correctly and use it wrongly then you are finished. Now what should we do? Choose virtue, practice persistently and move up step by step. Regarding

death, what aspect should we assume? “Today I will die!” Why? The benefits are stated as below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 6.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P224 L10]

For, if you assume that you will not die and think, “I will not die today,” or, “I probably will not die today,”

If you assume that you will not die or most probably will not die, with the thought that I will not die today, what would you do? You will concentrate on the immediate things. However, those immediate things will be meaningless when you pass away, just like a dream. Besides, those karmas that you have been creating will send you into hell, into the three miserable realms. Therefore, below it said: because you assume you will not die,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 6.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P224 L14]

you will continually make preparations to stay in this life

You will be busy with the immediate things in your life! Not only for today, also for tomorrow and the day after. You will be busy with all those things!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 7.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P225 L3]

and will not prepare for your next life.

and will not prepare for your next life.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 7.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P225 L5]

Meanwhile, you will be seized by the Lord of Death, and you will then die in sorrow.

Meanwhile, you will be seized by the Lord of Death. By that time, it will be too late and you will then die in regret.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 7.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P225 L8]

If you prepare for death every day, you will accomplish many goals for your next life.

On the other hand, if you prepare for death every day, because you think of death and is afraid to die, you will go all way out to practice, then you will accomplish many goals for your next life. Once you think ‘I will die today’, would you still be busy with your present life? Of course not and you will practice with all one’s might. If you practice recitation and once you think of death, you will practice recitation with all one’s might. Wouldn’t it be good?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 7.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P225 L12]

Hence, even if you do not die today, you will have done well.

Yes, perhaps you may think “Today I will die” but you actually do not die today. If you are able to think daily that you will die, what are the benefits? You have devoted yourself in accumulating virtuous karma. Under such condition, assuming that you do not die, it is just good as you are accumulating more and more virtuous karma! Therefore

the key point is not about guessing whether we will die today, but whether or not you will win the country's lottery ticket. If you persist to adopt the thought that today you are certain to die, you will strive to practice virtue. Isn't that very good? If you do not die, since you accumulate virtue daily, it is even better! If you die, you are already prepared. We must understand why it urges us to adopt that we will definitely die today. If you compare these two instances, I think even those with little intelligence will recognize clearly and distinctly: thinking that death is definite has such great benefits! Conversely, if you think you will not die, it has such big drawback and damage. This is a key point. So it says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 9.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P226 L9]

If you do die, it is even more meaningful in that you will have done what you needed to do.

If you do die today, it is crucial that you have practiced. Therefore it does not matter whether you die or not today. If you think today you will definitely die, it is of such great benefit to us.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 9.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P226 L12]

For example, when it is certain that a great enemy is coming to do you severe harm sometime between now and some point in the future, but you do not know on which day the enemy will come, you must be cautious every day. It is like that.

For example, when it is certain that a great enemy is coming

to cause us severe harm but we do not know when the enemy will come. Put aside that he is not coming, when he does come, it will definitely lead to a fatal fight and result in death. Under this condition, if you get prepared daily, such preparation will definitely benefit us. At this point, I felt that although we practice the teachings, in reality, in many areas, we are not in accordance with the teachings. Digress a little bit. In the West, e.g. America, many people, not just the aging but also the young people, have already prepared their will, however, for the Chinese, preparing a will is something violating a taboo. Now that I think of it getting prepared in this way is very good!

[39B, 10.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P227 L6]

Now that I have cultivated this habit, regardless of any matter, I will definitely write clearly and distinctly how to handle the state of affairs after my death. It is not only cash account, but also books etc. Moreover, when something changes, I will update the will. For example, I made preparation in this way when I was at Los Angeles Lotus Society. Similarly, when I went to Taipei's lecture hall and when I am here, I'm always prepared for death. After that, I pay no attention to the worldly matters, so what do I do with my remaining time? Quickly practice the recitation well, study the teachings well and mindful of the Sangha. This is absolutely true. Do not think that death is to be avoided. What we should really be afraid is the thought that we will not be mindful of death which is what we must avoid. Therefore, we are completely mistaken. Especially for the practitioners or someone with belief in cause and effect, assume that you can flee from death by not mentioning it, what is the use of the teachings? It is of no use. If we do not avoid what should be avoided

and avoid what should not be avoided, this is called misconception.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 11.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P227 L14]

If you think every day, “I will die today,” or at least “I will probably die today,” you will act for the benefit of whatever next life you will go to, and you will not make preparations to remain in this life.

Therefore if we can think everyday “I will die today”, or just “most likely I will die today” or at least “I will probably die today!”, you will definitely strive to practice diligently instead of being busy with matters in this life. You will act for the benefit of the next life and will not make preparations to remain in this life. Thus it says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 12.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P228 L4]

If you do not have this thought, you will see yourself as staying in this life, and you will make provisions for this life rather than act for the benefit of your next life.

On comparison of the two practices, the result is obvious. If you do not practice nor analyzes correctly, or after analyzing, you do not reflect correctly, you will not think “I will die today.” Under this condition, involuntarily you will prepare for this life. This is because of latent propensity since beginningless time! You cannot do without this or discard that. Then under this condition, you prepare for this life; and after preparing for this life, you passed away in the end. What is left? Non-virtuous karma! These things in the present are useless;, only non-

virtuous karma remains which will send you to the three miserable realms. This is why it tells us here: We must contemplate and say “Today I will die, today I will die!”

[39B, 13.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P228 L11]

Pay attention! This is not just a principle. It is something for you to practice. If you practice till the teaching is rooted in your mind, the thought would arise: “I will die today, I will die today!” at that time you are on the right track. Because it has the correct concept in here: when you are mindful of death, you would discard everything; and what do you do with the rest of the time? Of course, recite Amitabha quickly. Now people might wonder: “Ah ya, why am I distracted when I recite the Buddha’s name, why the thought does not arise?” Sigh! Because you have not learnt the correct method, of course the thought will not arise when reciting.

[39B, 14.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P229 L2]

Therefore everything has its complete principle, if you move up step by step conscientiously in accordance with the stages, you would have obtained the correct method from the virtuous teacher. And the first stage of the correct guidance is: “This human life is very hard to come by. It has great benefits but quite easy to lose”. If you do not make good use of this human body and lose it, you are truly like an animal, in reality, worse than an animal! What should you do once you have this human body? Practice. Then when you start to practice, what is the biggest and first obstacle? The first obstacle of the four errors: “Considering what is really impermanent to be permanent”. Therefore, it tells you the fact of impermanence. Needless to mention, once these two

things (death and impermanence) arise, how can you not recite the Buddha's name? The mindfulness of death is compelled in here! Thus once the thoughts arise you will recite the Buddha's name. Amazingly, any practitioner who has truly practiced impermanence shares the same experience: as he recites the Buddha's name; simultaneously the strength of impermanence remains with him. Hence once he ceases to recite the Buddha's name, the strength of impermanence will arise propelling him to continue with his practice. I tell you every experienced person who practices impermanence will have such an experience. Therefore, when we say: "The thought is not able to arise when you recite the Buddha's name!", The reason lies in here.

[39B, 15.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P229 L12]

Therefore, one must definitely not underestimate the Lamrim. In reality, the most splendid part is: once you can learn Lamrim well, you can accomplish at once, with the opportunity from an ordinary person to the noble being, not to mention reciting the Buddha's name! Therefore let me mention this to all of you : when you follow the teachings accordingly, you will be able to attain the highest grade in the Pure Land, needless to mention merely detaching from cyclic existence! Indeed, any person who practices accordingly will achieve enlightenment! The first concept has already been made clear but not yet perfectly complete, but at least for now, I think everybody can trust and also understand the [crucial point] mentioned here. Let's continue as below:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 16.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P230 L2]

For example, when you plan to stay someplace for a long time, you make preparations to stay there. If you think that you are not going to stay there, but are going elsewhere, you make preparations for leaving.

I cite an analogy. For example, when you plan to stay at some place for a long time, you will make preparations to stay there. Conversely, if you just plan to stay overnight in a hotel, will you still make preparations? The principle is extremely simple! Similar to the place we live, our body is like a hotel, will we still make preparations to stay? Isn't that very distinct and clear? What is the key point? It is ----- the mindfulness of death; it is clearly the most important concept. Previously when I mentioned it, you may feel: "Correct! I want to let go but actually is unable to do so." Now we have the method and, as long as you follow the method accordingly, you do not need to wait for me to mention it. Conversely, even if I tell you: "do not let go!" you will not listen to me and will let go completely. The principle lies here. So,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 17.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P230 L11]

Hence, every day you must develop an awareness of the imminence of your death in the following way.

This is the most important crucial point of the mindfulness of death. Hence, every day we must think: "Today I will die!" The first thing in the morning is to think: "Today I am most fortunate! I had taken off my shoes yesterday and unexpectedly I can wear it again today! Therefore tomorrow I definitely will not be able to wear it again! As there is only

today left, I must strive earnestly!” You will not make preparations; while being in the kitchen, you will not care whether its gruel, dried rice, Chinese cabbage, or bean curd, it is just to fill your stomach quickly. Similarly, you will not spent too much time on other things and put your focus solely on practice. How could it be possible that you do not succeed, given your practice in this manner? Let’s continue. With regard to this principle, it is elaborated in three major items.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P154; 39B, 18.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P231 L4]

1” The contemplation that the life span in this world (Jambudvipa) is uncertain

This life span is uncertain refers to the life span in this world (Jambudvipa) being uncertain.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 18.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P231 L6]

In general, the life span on the Uttarakuru continent is definite.

The life span on Uttarakuru is definite. Although life span on Uttarakuru is definite, he cannot practise. We will put this aside as it is useless even if life span is definite.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 19.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P231 L9]

Even though on the other continents besides Uttarakuru and Jambudvipa there is no certainty as to whether one

will be able to complete one's own life span, for the most part there is a definite life span.

Although the life span on other continents is not known for sure, for the most part, there is a definite life span. Only the life span on Jambudvipa is indefinite.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 19.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P231 L12]

The life span on Jambudvipa is very indefinite, ranging from the initial life span that is vast beyond measure, to an eventual maximum length of ten years of age.

The initial life span is eighty four thousand years and the shortest only ten years of age.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 19.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P232 L1]

Further, you can see that there is no certainty as to whether death will occur in youth, in old age, or in between.

This is very clear, now we can see that there is no certainty as to whether death will occur in old age, middle age or youth.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 19.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P232 L3]

In the same vein, the Treasury of Knowledge says:

Here the life span is uncertain: at the end of the cycle, It is ten years; in the beginning, measureless.

At the end of the cycle it is ten years, in the beginning, [measureless]; Having said measureless, in reality, it is not really measureless; it is as long as eighty four thousand years of age.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 20.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P232 L6]

The Collection of Indicative Verses says:

Among the many beings seen in the morning

Some are not seen in the evening.

Among the many beings seen in the evening

Some are not seen in the morning.

It tell us in every aspect that among the many beings seen in the morning, some are not seen in the evening; among the many beings seen in the evening, some are not seen in the morning!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 20.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P232 L9]

Also:

When many men and women

And even youths die,

How can the living be so confident to say,

“This person is still too young to die”?

Many beings, regardless of man or woman, dies at a young age. Who is so confident to say, we are still young; still young, nobody is confident.

**[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 20.33; Original
Commentary Script Vol 5, P232 L12]**

***Some die in the womb,
Some at birth,
Some when they can crawl,
Some when they can run.
Some are old, some are young,
Some are young adults.
Everyone goes gradually,
Like ripe fruit falling.***

This explains the sign of death. Many people are being born, which is fortunate; some die in the womb; some at birth; some when they can crawl; some when they can run. In other words people may die in the womb or at one, two or three years old, even at one hundred years old, but no exception to death. This death is just like ripe fruit falling: Under any circumstances, when being touched lightly, it will just fall and die.

**[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 21.15; Original
Commentary Script Vol 5, P233 L5]**

Bear in mind the cases you have seen or heard concerning the gurus and friends who reached the end of their life span but died without fulfilling their intentions, suddenly dying because of external and internal causes.

We must analyze and contemplate well: our gurus, our elders, our peers, too many people may die anytime, because of various internal or external causes: internal

causes include aging, illness, etc.; external causes include a sudden car accident, especially at present when it is very unsafe. Now there are too many causes, there are cars and other things. e.g. you might drive out and meet with an accident. You might travel and having fun suddenly the airplane exploded and fell....it is this terrifying! However, we still feel we have to do this and that.....unfortunately, we may die ----- without fulfilling our intentions!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 22.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P233 L12]

Be aware of death, thinking over and over, “I too am subject to such a death.”

Now we have to keep the concept of death in our mind. The first is life span on Jambudvipa is indefinite. How about the second?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 22.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P234 L2]

2”The contemplation that the causes of death are very many and the causes of life few

In the process, the external causes of death are very many and the causes to maintain our lives or the conditions to increase our population are very few.

Lamrim Text Vol 1, P155; 39B, 22.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P234 L4]

There are many sentient beings and insentient things that do harm to this life. Think in detail about the many

forms of injury inflicted by humans and nonhuman demons; how many dangerous animals harm life and limb;

To our lives, there are all kinds of external harm, e.g. sentient beings, insentient beings or demons. Sentient beings mean all living beings; insentient being includes earth, rocks, blocks etc. Moreover, the different types of humans and non-human demons can do harm to our lives even poisonous snakes, dangerous animals, tigers and lions can harm life and limb. In addition, a stone fell from the sky just at the time when you were running across, or the power cord suddenly snaps. All these are causes that we are unable to imagine!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 23.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P234 L11]

and similarly how harm occurs due to internal diseases and external elements.

In the above it said how harm occurs due to internal or external elements. Internal elements refer to the imbalance of our four elements, while external elements refer to various kinds of harm. We must observe and contemplate diligently.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 24.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P235 L1]

Furthermore, your body must be created from the four elements-----earth, water, fire, and wind----- and even these are harmful to each other when they become imbalanced. When some are in excess and others are deficient, an illness develops, and you are robbed of

your life. Hence, as these dangers are innately present within you, there is no security in body and life.

Furthermore, think in this way: our body must be created from the four elements, and even the four elements are mutually harmful to each other, e.g. the water may be too abundant or powerful. When some elements are in excess and others are deficient, an illness develops, and you are robbed of your life. These four elements are innately present within you, therefore, unfortunately as long as these elements are present in our body, there is no security in our body and life.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 25.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P235 L7]

In this vein, the Great Final Nirvana Sutra says:

The idea of death is that hateful enemies constantly surround this life, ruining it at every moment. Nothing exists that extends your life.

The above is cited from the sutra. It has been previously mentioned, of all the ideas, the idea of death is the best. Then how do we think? We must understand our life span is surrounded by harm, called “hateful enemies”. This “hateful enemies” are not necessarily sentient beings, but anything that can harm us. At every moment, they constantly ruin our life. However, nothing exists that can extend our life. This is asserted by the sutra. How about the commentary?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 25.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P235 L13]

Also, Nagarjuna's Precious Garland (Ratnavali) says:

You dwell among the causes of death

Like a butter lamp standing in a strong breeze.

What is our current state like? Like a butter lamp standing in a strong breeze which might extinguish anytime. Similarly, we might die anytime. This is absolutely true.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 26.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P236 L2]

In addition, his Friendly Letter says:

Life is more impermanent than a water bubble

Battered by the winds of many perils.

Thus, that you can inhale after exhaling,

Or awaken from sleep----these things are fantastic.

Lastly in his *Friendly Letter*, it tells us the above.... therefore *Friendly Letter* is truly our good friend. What did this good friend tell us? Our life has diminished largely and impermanence may come extremely rapid, just like what? Just like a water bubble in the winds, in the strong winds. The water bubble, even in a steady environment, it might rupture anytime; when in the wind, it would rupture quickly! Therefore in this life span, we are not sure whether we can exhale after inhaling; neither do we know the other way around; once falling into sleep, we do not know whether we will wake up. Therefore, he says, awakening from sleep is really not easy! We must recognize, understand and contemplate to spur oneself.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 27.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P236 L11]

The Four Hundred Stanzas says:

When the four elements are powerless to harm each other,

They are called a balanced collection, and physical pleasure arises.

But it is totally unsuitable to call “pleasurable”

A collection that is in opposition.

At present, these four elements in our body can mutually harm each other and we can do nothing about it. Our body consists of these four elements that can mutually harm each other and we have no control. If we regard this as a “pleasurable” thing, how mistaken and illogical we are.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 27.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P237 L1]

Because this is a time when the five impurities are rapidly spreading, there are extremely few persons who accumulate the great power of virtuous deeds that enables a long life.

What is the current state of our present era? It is a time when the five impurities are rapidly spreading. Therefore most of the various karma we have created are damaging and those who can really practice virtuous deeds that enable a long life or accumulate the great-power karma is extremely few, extremely few! By great-power karma, we mean the karma that can increase our efficacy and enable a long life.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 28.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P237 L6]

Also, since the medicinal power of our food and such is weak, we have little resistance to disease.

Even for food and drink, their effect is weakening and same for medicine etc. Therefore, we have little resistance to disease.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 28.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P237 L9]

The provisions we do use are not easy to digest

Then, the food and drink is our provision, which, after being consumed, can enhance our four elements. Unlike before, the power of these things, obtained from the time of five impurities, is slowly diminishing. Because of this, it is not easy to digest after eating. Its power is diminishing.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 29.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P237 L13]

and thus have diminished power for enhancing the body's great elements.

The above situation is our current state of fruition. In reality, this is fruition of the environmental effects. Presently, let's look carefully:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 39B, 29.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P238 L3]

Further, since you have done little to amass the collection of merit and your wrongdoing is very potent,

In reality how many of us can amass the collection of merits and sublime wisdom? Our wrongdoing is very potent!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 40A, 00.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P241 L1]

Further, since you have done little to amass the collection of merit and your wrongdoing is very potent, practices such as mantra recitation have little efficacy. All of this makes it extremely difficult to prolong your life.

Even if we practice mantra recitation etc, sorry, we must understand that this yields little effect and unsatisfactory. Hence, to really wish to prolong your life, this will be very difficult.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 40A, 00.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P241 L4]

Furthermore, there are no causes of staying alive that do not become causes of death.

The things that we enjoy now, such as food and house, all these can be considered as the conditions of life causes of staying alive. But sorry, without any single exception, there is a possibility for each turning into a cause of death. For instance, one cannot eat excessively, this is quite clear, but you will still want to enjoy it. If you find that walking is inconvenient, and drive a car instead, sorry, we may end up with an accident. While all these are causes of staying alive, they can also be the causes of death. Thus,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P156; 40A, 01.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P242 L1]

In other words, you seek such things as food and drink, shelter, and friends in order not to die, but even these can become causes of death. For instance, you may consume the wrong food and drink, or consume too much or too little. Your shelter could crumble, or your friends could deceive you.

As such, to ensure our survival “in order not to die”, we seek after the conditions for life. Now that we are alive, what else do we need? Food, then a place to stay, next we want our relatives and friends etc. These are the things. End result? In seeking after “food”, if you consume too much, it is not good, consuming too little is not good either. If you consume the wrong type of food and drink, it is not good as well. Drawing from my own experience, two days ago, I took some fried food as it was someone’s well wishes for me. The food was fried very fragrantly, but after eating it, I was in pain for a few days, and still have not recovered. It’s quite clear, isn’t it? Right here before us. Next, it’s regarding shelter. You built a nice home; but sorry, should it run into problem, it could crumble. And then, your close family and friends, etc. all may be well and good; but after a couple of days, they may become enemies, sue each other in court, and battle over each other mercilessly without caring for the other party’s life or death. All these are conditions for life, but alas, consequently, they can become the causes of death. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 02.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P242 L10]

Thus, it is clear that there are no causes of staying alive that cannot become causes of death.

If you do not observe, and still feel justified of the need to have this and have that. If you really observe, you will realize that these immediate things, none of them is not causes of death. I recall a virtuous friend who once said to me these words, and till now I still remember vividly, although they were quite piercing to my ears when I heard it then. I might as well recap it now: he said that for us now, this mundane world is quite laughable, why so? Deceive oneself as well as others, and then get deceived by others! Why did he say that? For instance, when we meet each other, we'll say: Ah ya, you are doing fine, I am fine, flatter each other and also relish at being flattered. As such, question yourself: are you really sincere when lavishing praise at others? Alas, Amitabha! Are you really sincere at heart in praising others? Not necessarily! And yet, we persistently take a liking to this. Why are we doing this?

[40A, 03.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P243 L4]

Why do we want to interact with one another? To seek causes for living, to seek companionship, and yet when asked what is going on in his heart? That is, what you are doing at that very moment, it is a cause of death. Of course, this is the worldly mundane stuff. Right, we get along fine, I give you a meal treat today, or buy you a drink and we seek enjoyment at the pub. Why so? My hope is to earn a bit more money from you, dig a little more. Isn't it evidently clear in this instance? The worldly friends are also as such, yet we are still busy doing these, this is upside down. Really is upside down, humankind is as such! But if you ask him to give up, it will be in vain! So people with their eyes open, head for the water and "jumped"! One word, if you contemplate on it, it is the truth right? Therefore, this is not

Dharma. This is a reasoning we certainly do not understand. Thus, when we contemplate on it, we need to be well awakened, well awakened! As I think about this, the Dharma is so precious, indeed precious.

[40A, 04.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P243 L12]

Thus sometimes, I frequently motivate myself, motivate myself. This is why I feel such high regards for my virtuous teacher and I'm still very grateful towards him. I recall in the past when we were together, when a lighter mood called for it, I would strike a casual conversation with him and asked how he was doing. My teacher would sternly reply: "You come all the way here, blabber all these, whatever for?" At that time, I did not quite comprehend, but subsequently when I heard others saying the exact words, it then dawned on me, absolutely right! This is the way we sentient beings deceive ourselves, get deceived by others. Now that you have become a monk, still continue to do such things for what? When ancient Gurus meet, they will invariably greet each other with: "Hi! What have you been working hard on?" and with an accompanied intent glare at you. I now then realize, this is why the ancients could achieve accomplishment. In comparison, when we meet with people, we greet each other with: "Ah ya, how have you been? You gained weight, then you lost weight, ah, I should quickly get some tonic for you!" We may even feel touched by them and think: very well, very well, he is such a good friend. This is harmful to you! Don't you know? It is an absolute truth. Therefore, this point, in particular, tells us that: Not just [causes of] death, but the causes of staying alive are also causes of our death. Now we must recognize this insight, and then we quickly and

diligently practice, and only if so, there is an opportunity for us.

[40A, 05.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P244 L7]

Page 83 regarding the subject on the mindfulness of death. Master Tsong-Kha-Pa had stated clearly what are the faults of not cultivating mindfulness of death, what are the benefits of cultivating mindfulness of death; and how to contemplate cultivate on it, how to contemplate cultivating on it. After understanding these, the later part is on how to cultivate mindfulness of death. Cultivate this by way of three roots, where each is subdivided into 3 reasons, now we are at the second reason of the second root, I have gone through that. As mentioned earlier on, there is no certainty to the lifespan at Jumbudvipa, no certainty and one can die any time. After that, the most important is this second section. After learning this, we must contemplate and cultivate this thought in our mind: I am going to must die today, I am going to die today! This will help us greatly in our practice. Regarding this point, it is not about us gaining an understanding of the meaning, we must have a firm grip on this concept, it is one of the key critical success factors we need to rely on, in determining whether we can succeed in our practice.

[40A, 6.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P244 L15]

What is at the latter part, are that causes of death are many and causes of staying alive are few. For example, before us, we seek after a variety of things, all kinds of happiness, clothing, food, shelter and transport, all these are without doubt the conditions for living. But in reality, even if every cause is for the purpose of ensuring that we stay alive, there

is no exception that every single thing will soon become the cause of our death. We seek good food and drink, but if not careful enough, one get poisoned! Then we say we build a safe place to live comfortably, such as that, but that house, like any other thing will bring us harm. When we go out, we want a comfortable mode of transport, we may get into an accident, there is no exception. Therefore, cautiously speaking, all the things that contribute to the causes of staying alive are helping and in turn contributing to the causes of death. The other day, one of the practitioners met with an accident while on his way to visit his family members. Isn't this a very clear example? Such things that are supposed to enhance our convenience and happiness, but it ended up that, some of these things had on the contrary enhanced the opportunities to become the cause of death. This is life, this is in fact the truth of life! Let's now look at page 83, second section:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 08.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P245 L9]

Since life itself is headed toward death, the conditions for life would offer no security even if they were numerous.

As a matter of fact, while we are living, and striving forward, life itself in reality is also headed towards step-by-step moving towards, death and step-by-step moving towards death. This is an absolute truth. Therefore, the view held by mundane world is of the opposite, which is “every additional year to heaven's age is an addition to human's age”. For us who are practitioners, we must understand that as time goes by, human beings' life span is diminishing, and this reduction in life span unceasingly continues. Therefore, it is as such for

the passage of time, we who live in this world and seek after the various conditions for life will similarly cause the end result of death. Therefore, among all the conditions for life, there is none that can offer any conviction.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 9.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P246 L1]

The Precious Garland:

The causes of death are many,

Those of staying alive, few

Those too become causes of death.

Thus, always practice the teaching.

This reasoning is easily discerned, there are several circumstances that can be attributed to, in causing us death, yet those that help us to stay alive are few and far between; those that help us stay alive will too become causes of death. Therefore, now that we understand this point, there is but only one thing --- which is to practice the teaching! Other than practice, all other things are unreal, all other things are unreal. You get yourself busy doing these things, even if they do help you, do not contribute to your death, after you are done, two legs stretched out (upon death), what then? It is still a dream, still a dream. This dream has no value to you at all, but you were so busy over the unreal things, and in the process, accumulating all kinds of karmic debt, and you suffer immeasurable pain because of the karma, is it worth it? Therefore, there is only one thing we should do --- which is to practice the teaching! Practice the teaching.

[40A, 10.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P246 L8]

Regarding this point, the most important thing is that we must establish the correct insight. If you do not have the correct insight, we will invariably find fault with this place, over here is not right, over there is not right either! Hence, besides reading the Lamrim, we must also read up many of the ancients' autobiographies etc. You see the lives of ancient people were tough in those circumstances. If we imagine them saying this cannot, that cannot, all those people would either be long dead, or they would not live long or be able to continue to live, but their life span yet were incredibly long! Life span was still very long. Venerable Xu-Yun had lived for over one hundred years old. This includes not only the practitioners but among the people too. There are such kinds of people. They hardly had any good food or good clothing to wear. In fact, practically none! Therefore, if we waste our mental energy over these, that will be such a waste, such a waste! You come over here, and yet spend the whole day and night busy doing these, and with the mind following that as well, is it worth it? You need to be vigilant, be vigilant! You must work very hard to find the cause of your sickness, and then eliminate all the roots. At this place, even though other people may tell you, after finishing it, if you are not aligned to it, it is superfluous. You will still be bitter and sorrowful, even if you just sitting there, alas, you are sitting there bitterly and sorrowfully. Why bother! Let's continue.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 12.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P247 L4]

3'' The Contemplation that the time of death is uncertain because the body is very fragile

This is the third part of a big section. Finally, we must work hard on contemplating that this body of ours, that is so fragile;

like it will perish with one touch. Therefore, it has no means to protect you, even if you say this thing (body) is solid, for how long will it protect you.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 12.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P247 L8]

Your body is very fragile, like a water bubble. Therefore, it does not take much damage to destroy it. Your life could be taken even by something that you only imagine to be harmful, like being pricked by a thorn. Hence, you can very easily be overcome by any of the causes of death.

Our body is like a water bubble. That thing is just disappointing. Even when there is no wind, it can dissipate by itself, what's more to say about this bubble in the midst of strong winds. So, it really does not take much damage to destroy it. Indeed, there is no need for any major harm, even with a small minute prick, just one prick and your life can be taken. The other day we mentioned there was a hornet's bee right in front. The backside rear of the hornet's bee has a thorn, a very tiny thorn, but if you are pricked by it, it can cause you to lose your life. And then the mosquito, one bite by a mosquito, or several of the small mosquitoes, can spread harmful germs. Once bitten, you may fall sick and die from it. So this body is so fragile! Therefore we owe it to ourselves to understand that, the attributing causes that can really cause our death, are plenty and easily so. Please see:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 14.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P248 L3]

***The Friendly Letter says:
If not even ash will remain when the physical world----***

***The earth, Mount Meru, and the seas----
Is burned up by seven blazing suns,
What need is there to mention humans, who are so very
frail?***

At the end of the degenerated age, seven days will simultaneously emerge in the sky, with seven blazing suns all out. At that time, the earth, Mount Meru and all the lands, will be burned until not a single ash remain. Now we look at the stones, steel wire, they are so solid that you cannot even destroy them in any way, but at that stage, not a single trace will be left behind. Thus, let alone our body that is so fragile. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 14.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P248 L9]

After you have reflected in this way, you should resolve that since there is no certainty as to when the Lord of Death will destroy your body and life, you will practice the teaching right now, without assuming that you still have time.

If you follow the previous train of thoughts to contemplate, you will feel that, when are we going to die? When are we going to die? It really is undisputable, undisputable! Hence

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 15.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P248 L12]

Make this pledge many times from the depths of your heart.

Do not ever assume that you still have time, never ever do that. You should resolve and make a pledge: to cultivate now,

starting from now! The previous big section talked about the decision to cultivate; cultivate, the decision to cultivate. But we will still procrastinate, right. Saying that we will cultivate, means we surely will, but do it gradually. Further, from here we understand that we must cultivate, but we need to have a life of leisure and opportunity body and also, death may come at any moment, and after we die, there is nothing left. Therefore, we must next understand that: not only must we cultivate, we must cultivate right away! Must cultivate right away! This is the second resolution whether you succeed or not. It will depend on this, depend on this.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 16.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P249 L6]

The Letter to Kaniska says:

***The Lord of Death, a friend no one,
Descends suddenly. So do not wait,
Saying, "I'll do it tomorrow."
Practice the sublime teaching with urgency.***

***It is not good for people to say,
"I'll put it off until tomorrow and do this today."
A tomorrow when you are gone
Will undoubtedly come.***

The Lord of Death will not bargain with you, he will come when he wants to. Therefore do not ever say: "Ah ya, tomorrow then say, the day after next then say!" Want to do anything, do it right away, do it right away. Therefore, in delaying things till tomorrow, the following day, this is not the correct way, this is not the correct way. You all must understand, how can you be assured of a tomorrow? This is

the absolute truth. Why is it that we are unable to arise with such an insight within us? This is because for eons, we have been having this twisted and wrong thinking, that's why it is called the endless nights of ignorance.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 17.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P249 L13]

At this juncture, I would like to remind again that, regarding endless nights of ignorance, forming an unreal reversal, there is only one method – to counter it intentionally, the details of which will be explained later. Put it simply, it is to generate a force from your mind to continuously observe and contemplate. It is unlike now where our mind is vague and ambiguous, this is something we need to recognize and take cognizant of. If we are able to discern and establish a correct understanding of this insight, we should work hard immediately. If you still do not understand, continue to work hard. Our understanding of the various principles of practice also known as the phenomena, can be said to be vague, or not knowing at all. Although we talk about practice, we do not know what is meant by practice, and yet we preach to others about practice, sigh, really! We do not know what we are saying, and also do not know what the content is about, Really, we are deceiving ourselves and deceiving others, we are teaching ourselves and others the wrong things. Let us continue.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P157; 40A, 18.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P250 L7]

Furthermore, the lord of yogis, Sri Jagan-mitrananda, says:

***Lord of the Earth, while this borrowed body
Is still healthy, without sickness or deterioration,***

***Take full advantage of it,
Acting in order to end your fear of sickness, death, and
deterioration.***

***Once sickness, aging, deterioration, and the like occur,
You might remember to practice, but what can you do
then?***

In Dharma, it said that this body, this body, sorry, does not belong to you, it is not yours! Then, what is this? There are various causes. Mention the “King”, because the King has the authority to kill lives. In other words, our body is on loan from him, at which time he wants to take your life, he will take your life. Here it talks about not only the King, but also the various other causes of death. When it wants your life, you do not know. Therefore, it can be said that this body is one that is borrowed, when you need to return it, you will not know at all. Not only that. So now that you are healthy, without sickness nor in pain, and not aging as well, and that you are well and able, this is the only time you can practice. What should be done? While there is no sickness, no aging nor deterioration, we must “take full advantage” to practice, this is the time we should practice, only this is solid and stable, only this is dependable.

**[40A, 20.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5,
P251 L3]**

You need to take advantage of the time when you are well and healthy, to practice. When sickness or death occurs, you will be fearless. Otherwise, when you are at ease and you are happily not working hard, wasting away your life, then wait till sickness befalls, ageing comes, at this time, this you can't move, that you can't move, even if you want to practice

or do anything, it is too late, it is too late! On this, we must carefully and deeply contemplate, observe, so as to develop a kind of force to resolve changing our bad habits and push us to practice. Next, there are three parts under this section.

The contemplation of the uncertainty of the time of death is the most important of the three roots. This is the very thing that will redirect your mind, so work hard at it.

[40A, 21.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P251 L8]

Among the three big parts, the most important is the one that is being covered now – the uncertainty of the time of death. If you can contemplate in this rightful manner, that death has no definite date, hence you think: “Ah ya, I will die today!” Once you think of death, you will be afraid; when afraid, will work hard at practicing. Therefore here it tells us that, this is the most important point, most important, most important! On this point, we can apply this to the normal circumstances where everyone is able to experience it. Often, there are many people who are quite particular over this and over that. Hey, why do you think that he is so particular? It is for the body! The need for vitamins for nutrition, is for the body; then when in slight pain, repeating over and over again, all are for the body. And now, if let’s say you think you are going to die, it is for what purpose? It is still for self. This is very clear and obvious reasoning.

[40A, 22.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P252 L3]

Thus, regarding this state of mind that has the ability to be transformed, you must on your own, think of ways to contemplate on it diligently. Maybe you may have this

experience, for instance, you are actually feeling fine, and then one day a doctor came to examine our sickness, regardless of what sickness, could be to do an X-ray, then suddenly, it revealed something, he tells you, “So and so, you have pulmonary disease!” You were actually chatting and laughing, bouncing and vivacious one moment, but once heard that you have pulmonary disease, you go through a mental collapse immediately, and you are not be able to do anything after that. Or when you went for heart pressure measurement, and was told to have high blood pressure ---- oh no! Ah! Later on when you go for lunch, you will feel that this can’t do and that can’t do. I think we all do have such an experience! What does this mean? It is evidently clear that within our heart (or mind), there is this power, force, strength, but normally, our mind will turn to follow our afflictions, being led by the nose of afflictions, oh, it’s a real pity! The practice that you are engaging now is so that you are able to initiate, through rightful observation, contemplation, to proactively redirect your mind, at that time, it will yield positive effects, this is the second root. And then, the last of which,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P158; 40A, 24.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P252 L12]

c” The contemplation that at the time of death nothing helps except religious practice

Regarding the third root, how should we contemplate? It says that wait till the moment of your death, other than religious practice, there is nothing that will be of help. Let us now take a look:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P158; 40A, 24.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P253 L1]

1 Friends will not help

When you see that you must go to your next life, no matter how many loving and very worried relatives and friends surround you at that time, you cannot take even one with you.

2 Resources will not help

No matter how many piles of beautiful jewels you have, you cannot take even the slightest particle with you.

3 Your body will not help

As you even have to discard the flesh and bones with which you were born, what need is there to mention anything else?

Further, we can see that when we die, what is going to happen then? No matter how loving is your family members, relatives and friends, at that time, no one will follow you. They are also not willing to or even if they are willing, they are not able to. Even if they have followed you, it is still futile and will not be of help to you, not the slightest bit! This is regarding people. How about the phenomenon? No matter how many beautiful jewels you have accumulated, no matter how many accolades, no matter what resources, will it help? Hey, similarly, you cannot take even the slightest particle with you. Not to mention about these external things, even your own precious body, the one you have fed well, just for a slight illness, you feel that this part of the body does not feel right, that part is not right. At the end of your life, your two legs stretched out (upon death) and about to go, may I ask what is there left? There is nothing left, there is nothing left, there is nothing left! We must therefore understand:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P158; 40A, 25.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P253 L11]

Consequently, think, “It will certainly come to pass that all the wonders of this world will leave me behind; I will leave them behind as well, and go to some other world.

Regarding this point, we must always think frequently, think frequently! No matter how perfect you are, no matter how perfect you are, this thing, in the end, you cannot bring it along with you. Since you cannot bring it together with you, and neither will it follow you, this fact lies before us, but we are still stubbornly so opposite in thinking. Sigh, when talked about it is just so pathetic, when talked about it, is just so pathetic! Is this not a very clear and obvious truth?

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P158; 40A, 26.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P254 L2]

In fact, this will happen today! Contemplate how, at the time of death, only religious practice will serve as a refuge, a protection, a defense.

Similarly, when we look at these three points from the beginning or at from the back, the third point explained it very clearly. So an overall view on the contemplation of death we can take is that: yes, there is nothing that can be brought along when one dies, and when is the time of death? It may happen today! We have understood it previously that, at the time of true contemplation, must contemplate that: Today will certainly die! At that time, there is only one thing I can rely on --- dharma, this is the most absolute, this is the most absolute. Then from here, you will naturally give rise to the

third affirmation, to affirm what --- not to let any of the false things before you be an obstacle to you!

[40A, 27.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P254 L8]

From these three roots, we should attain three affirmations, three insights. Three insights: The first is death is certain, the second is the time of death is uncertain, the third is there is nothing you can bring with you except dharma when you come to pass. To affirm what? The first is you must practice, the second is you must practice now. But there is an obstacle facing us now that we are practicing, we cannot let go. We cannot let go of this, and that. Therefore according to the third point, at the time of death, you will leave everything behind, no matter how loving your family is, disregard! No matter what status and position, reputation, money, how important they are, disregard! Even you have to discard your flesh and body. Do not say: aiya, this is not right, that is not right, because at the time of death, does it help? It does not help. This logic is very simple, but, it is of value to us. So when we practice, we have to reflect and contemplate, take heed of the crucial points. Then you will have the opportunity to practice, the opportunity possibility to practice, and only then will you have the probability to succeed, the probability to succeed. Next, let us continue:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P158; 40A, 28.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P255 L3]

***The Letter to Kaniska says:
When the past karma that caused
This life is spent,
And you are connected with the new karma***

***And led by the Lord of Death,
Everyone turns back.
Except for your virtue and sin,
Nothing will follow you.
Know thus and act well.***

What did he say? The past karma, that is the past karma that we are experiencing in this life. Once this past karma that caused this life is spent, sorry, once this past karma that caused this life is spent, we will die. To use current layman terms, this is our own individual destiny. What is destiny? It is the past karmic actions you have created in your previous lives and the effects of which are manifested in this life. When the effect of the past karma that caused this life is spent, well, your life comes to an end. At that time, what will come next? What will come next will be dependent on the karmic actions you have created in this life.

[40B, 00.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P257 L1]

Due to the karma that is done and accumulated in this life, this will lead us to the next life, the next life. When we proceed to our next life, except for the virtuous and non-virtuous karma we have created, all the immediate things that is, not a single thing can be taken along with us. That being the case, at present, we will certainly not spend our time indulging in these immaterial things. The first thing is to quickly purify the non-virtuous karma and increase the virtuous karma. We should recognize this sooner and quickly practice diligently.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P158; 40B, 00.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P257 L5]

Also, Sri Jagan-mitrananda says”

***Divine One, no matter what fortune you have gained,
When you depart to another life,
As though conquered by an enemy in the desert,
You are alone without children or queen,***

***Without friends, without clothing,
Without kingdom, and without palace.
Though you have limitless power and armies,
You will not see or hear them.***

***Eventually not even one being or thing
Will follow after you.
In brief, if you lack even a name,
What need is there to speak about anything else?***

Here it says that no matter how high is your social status, how much wealth you possess, when you die, what then? “As though conquered by an enemy in the dessert”, it is as if you are being in captive by the enemy, you cannot take anything with you, not a single thing at all! Your loved ones such as children, spouse, and things like food, friends, country, status, no matter how strong your power is, there is nothing that you can take along with you. Therefore, he tells us “You will not see or hear them”, all the things that belong to you previously, they can neither be seen nor heard, this is the predicament! Hence, this is something we must work on before doing anything, please do not wait until then, by that time, it will be too late, too late by then! We must take cognizance of this particular point.

[40B, 2.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P258 L7]

This is certainly what practice is. Before you have regrets, you are apprised of the consequence and then work diligently on preventing it and not wait till that day. Such is the characteristic of religious practice. It is due to Buddha's compassion that he has so kindly revealed to us the circumstances and if we proactively put it into practice, it can even remove this kind of grievous harm. This is truly the excellent benefit of practicing the Dharma.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 3.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P258 L11]

Try to achieve lasting happiness for your next life and beyond by being mindful of death in this way, reflecting on how leisure and opportunity are very important, are difficult to obtain, and are very easily lost despite being difficult to obtain. If instead you seek only to find happiness and to avoid suffering up until your death, then you are going to need a course of conduct which surpasses animal behavior, since animals are better than humans at temporal happiness.

Similar to the above step-by-step approach, let us contemplate and observe, say now that we have obtained this life of leisure and opportunity that is of great significance and has such great benefit. All present and future concerning the higher status rebirth and supreme enlightenment will be dependent on this. Our own benefit as well as that of others will have to depend on it, such great benefits it yields. In fact among the six realms including the three worlds, only this human body can achieve it, other than that, no one else has the means to do it. It is of great use, and yet it is so difficult to obtain, we must understand this fact. Not only it is difficult to

obtain, it can be easily lost too, very easily lost. Take a step further, when it loses its function, let's say death. When death comes, it comes, and then what happens after death? You can take with you not a single thing. Thus, if we do not make use of this available opportunity where we can engage in cultivation but yet not do so, not seize the present opportunity to cultivate, but rather, spend time indulging in the non-relevant things, and what do these non-relevant things refer to? They are the temporary happiness, hence, here it says that "If instead you seek only to find happiness and to avoid suffering up until your death", this particular point is as a matter of fact, an illustration of our present predicament.

[40B, 5.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P259 L8]

At this juncture, let us pause and think: What are we preoccupied with? Certainly, without an exception for anyone, it is to seek temporary happiness. Sigh, over the matter of food, clothing, accommodation, we cannot live without this, we cannot live without that and interpersonal relations, it's little wonder how many people's lives have been harmed by that! People in the mundane world have all along been preoccupied with such matters. This is why they are considered pitiful and ignorant people. Those of us who are learning Dharma, if you are still busy with these, can I ask what are you cultivating? This is one point we must surely understand.

[40B, 6.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P259 L13]

Therefore, while we are still living and yet we keep ourselves busy indulging in such things, we stand inferior to the

animals, why is it so? The animals busy with temporal happiness are much more powerful than humans! The survival skill that animals have far exceeds that of humans, this is a reality. When we think of going somewhere, although humans can be said to be the most superior among all beings, you can invent several things, the invention will require much efforts right? Following the invention, you have to make a purchase, a high price is needed right? Hey, the animal has no need for this. It has wings and can fly, it does not need to (make purchase)! Then, when you go out to the sea, even you have a boat, the animal does not need one, it can swim, it has the conditions of life. Next, you want to build a house and others etc., the animal can just dig a hole and burrow in it and problem is resolved! We need to boil the food when we want to eat it, the animal can just swallow the food raw, and still grows fairly well, aren't you worse off than the animal? This is absolutely true!

[40B, 7.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P260 L6]

In which aspect we humans are considered more powerful than animals? It is to realize how we can make use of this life of leisure and opportunity to cultivate to liberate ourselves out of cyclic existence! Therefore, if we do not skillfully make use of it to surpass the animals, this is such a pity! What a pity! Therefore, at present, we usually ah, really, excluding those who do not cultivate, I feel pity for many practitioners! In their ignorant state, they feel like they are monks and come to the monastery. By staying ignorant, is this cultivation? If being in an ignorant state is considered to be in meditative practice, then I feel we are no better than a clam that has been clammed shut and asleep for a thousand years living in

this ignorant state. This is absolutely true. We must understand this point. Therefore,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 8.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P260 L13]

Otherwise, even though you have obtained a life in a happy realm, it will be just as though you had not.

If you do not make use of this opportunity and cultivate even though you have attained to be in such a rare happy realm, it will be just as though you have not attained it. Regarding this point, you need to pay heed and diligently practice. This will be right!

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 8.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P261 L3]

For, as <Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds> says:

The dharma on <Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds> contains insights meant for the real practitioners, it tells us very clearly! It says:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 9.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P261 L6]

***Those who are tortured by bad karma
Waste their wonderful leisure and opportunity, so hard to gain,
In order to acquire some trifling thing
Which is not so rare and which even animals may attain.***

We spend our time busy doing these immediate mundane things, would you say that it has no benefit? There is but it

has very little gain. But if you waste your life just to obtain a very small quantity of benefit, I am sorry to say that, you are no better than the animals! The animals can also do the same thing. Now that you have obtained a life of leisure and opportunity that is very difficult to obtain to begin with and yet you are busy with all these immaterial things, when you lose your human life of leisure and opportunity, you will never obtain it again. Ah ya! We have repeatedly said this previously. Therefore, over these two issues on death and life of leisure and opportunity, you must relate the two and contemplate on them constantly. At the same time, repeat the same thing when you are engaged in meditation. You contemplate on the life of leisure and opportunity and then contemplate on mindfulness of death by going through back and forth. When you have achieved some results, hold on to it, quickly meditate diligently and thoroughly. You will definitely be able to produce it. When this arises, the problems encountered in cultivation will naturally be resolved.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 10.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P262 L2]

Therefore, although it is quite hard to produce this mindfulness of death, you must work at it because it is the foundation of the path.

Thus, even with this kind of principle explained above and this kind of mentality, we still find it difficult during meditation, right? It is not easy, right? Even if you find it difficult, you must however realize that, this is the foundation of the path. It is the root, therefore one must work at it, must work hard at it! It is understandable if you do not subscribe to it, but if you really are talking about cultivation, this is one area that requires great effort.

[40B, 11.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P262 L6]

At this point, one Elder told us something which we must remember: there is a practitioner who said this after the meditation session: “Ah ya, I have been meditating half a day and yet to no avail!” What did the Elder say: “You don’t deceive others, when did you meditate?” In actual fact, it can be said that, often when we sit down and meditate, it is either we are daydreaming or we are falling asleep, when have we wholeheartedly focusing on sustaining the meditation? After sitting for half a day, being partly drowsy and partly daydreaming for half a day and then says: “Ah ya, I have been meditating for half a day and yet to no avail!” You did not even engage in any meditation, how can you produce it? Therefore, to talk about real meditation, one must first understand the principle, put into action, then examine our mind, look into ourselves and say: “Have I done it correctly? Ah! Cannot do this ah!” It alerts us in each and every way, in fact this present life of leisure and opportunity was obtained diligently through our previous life, and not simply dropped from the sky. And now that you are sustaining your meditation, much efforts and a high price have been committed! If you still do not do the right way, it is a sheer waste and this is about yourself after all!

[40B, 12.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P263 L2]

Take heed! Thus, we should not preach carelessly about selflessness at this initial stage. Although the ultimate aim of meditation is about being selfless, the reason for doing so, it is still for the self, still for your own self. Consequently, you will discover that: If it is for your own good, the one who will

really cause you harm, is still you yourself! Only at that time, you will diligently work at discarding the self, we must correctly understand this, understand it correctly. Therefore, it can be said that one needs to have a complete understanding of the entire teachings, its sequence and progression. Please do not get confused, otherwise if you are reckless about it and use it carelessly, it may sound nice, beautiful, but of futile use when put into practice. It is all based on the above. Next, the Elder,

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 13.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P263 L8]

Bo-do-wa said:

For me “appearance and exclusion” refers to my own meditation on impermanence. With it I exclude all the appearances of this life such as intimates, relatives, and possessions. Then, knowing that I must always go to the next life alone, without anything else, I think that I will do nothing except religious practice. Thereupon, a lack of attachment for this life begins.

For us now, we cannot let go of this, cannot let go of that, why is it so? Ah! This also means that, even if you want to let go, there is however an internal force beckoning you not to let go, making you hard to let go. Why? This is because of self, for this self, you indulge in all ways and means to dress it. You will always think: Ah ya, how can I do this? We often say: “This is not so good for one’s ego.” We often talk about vanity – don’t say this to others lightly. If you observe closely, none of us is an exception. We are all in it. The real reason that traps us in this mundane world is this thing.

[40B, 14.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P264 L2]

Therefore, I have asked for over 10 copies of the book called “*A Casual Talk of a Dream (一梦漫言)*”, I have said it many times before, and also recommended that everyone reads it. But then I realized, the number of people who have read the book is very few, you all might as well read it diligently, look at the model of how the ancient elders practice. At present, we talk about being in meditation from dawn to dusk, and yet whole day long we are talking about adorning our ego and not discarding it, it is self deception, deceiving one’s own self! Therefore, what is “appearance and exclusion”? It is “impermanence”. Once you are mindful of death, you will not have greed for anything. Why you can be void of greed? It is because after you have been meditating, you will then understand that: all the things before you, all the perfect glamour in this current life, hey, till that time (of death), till that time (of death), all unreal and have caused you harm. By that time, you will be alone and you go to the next life alone. The only thing that can follow you is the karma you have created. Once you understand this, regarding the material things, you will not be deceived by it. Not only you will not be deceived, even when they are presented as gifts to you, you cannot wait to escape from it. Hence, “Thereupon, a lack of attachment for this life begins”. There are only but a few words here, but do place it in your mind and frequently reflect on it and internalize it, do it frequently. Next, it says that:

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 16.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P264 L13]

Until this arises in your mind, the paths of all the teachings remain blocked.

For the genuine practitioners, what should they do? The first thing is to meditate this. When the force to contemplate on death arises, it will naturally come to you that, all those immediate things, ah ya, this cannot be it, that cannot be given up, this is also embarrassing and that also can't be let go, all be discarded, totally discarded! What is next after you have discarded them? Focus on cultivating the Dharma! This is the key to formal cultivation of the Dharma. If you can't break through this or the mind can't produce mindfulness of death, the obstacle is still residing there. Consequently, deeper learning of the teachings will be just mere words! Therefore, this biggest obstacle obstructing your practice must be removed.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 17.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P265 L6]

Also, Dol-wa said:

Along the way, accumulate the collections and purify obscurations. Make supplications to the deity and the guru. Contemplate earnestly and with perseverance. If you do these, though you may think that knowledge will not arise in even one hundred years, it will arise anyway because nothing composite remains as it is.

When we normally talk about cultivation, ah ya, cultivation, one needs to do repentance, accumulate the collections and make supplications to Buddha and etc. What are these referring to? Normally, when we do repentance or supplicate for blessings or recitations of Buddha, we clearly know the need to be earnest, respectful, diligent and others. We understand this principle, but when the time comes to cultivate, we just cannot do it! Ah ya, you can't do it today,

tomorrow also cannot, one day also cannot, ten days also cannot, one year also cannot. Often, after a long time, the knowledge still does not arise. I think each one of us will have this experience right? This experience, yes. How to deal with it? Eh! Wonderful! “Nothing composite”, this impermanence will not “remain as it is”, as all the things in this world are impermanent phenomena. If let’s say you are able to meditate on impermanence and during meditation, though the result is not so ideal the knowledge arises! It is still not that easy, but this difficulty will be relatively easier than the preceding moment. Therefore, if you switch to meditate on impermanence initially and try a little harder, the knowledge will arise in no time.

[40B, 19.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P266 L4]

Once your knowledge on impermanence arises, when the time comes, even if you are asked not to recite the Buddha or not to do repentance, you cannot do it, why? Because you clearly understand all the non-virtuous actions you have committed in the past. You will die anytime and that after death, you are going to hell, would you still be willing to get busy with accumulating material wealth? Or would you be willing to get busy with building a monastery? Of course, you have generated the altruistic intention of Bodhicitta, that’s impressive, a great Bodhisattva, which is mentioned later. We must understand this. Thus, to reiterate once more, someone builds that monastery, that is the work of a great Bodhisattva but we have yet to reach that level. Therefore, under such circumstances, we must greatly rejoice and praise them. As for ourselves, we should measure ourselves and ask: have I developed this serious disenchantment? After developing disenchantment to subsequently develop

the great spirit of enlightenment and after understanding what is suffering, willingly help others. If your knowledge has not arisen, do not bother about others but quickly and diligently focus on changing your own mindset first. Therefore, as a true practitioner, we absolutely do not look at other people's faults. We only need to have a firm grasp of the right view, diligently persevere as if our head is on fire and devoid of laxity, cultivate thoroughly in accordance with the teaching. The first step to take --- human life of leisure and opportunity is difficult to obtain and the rapidness of impermanence. Next.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 20.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P266 L15]

When someone asked Ga-ma-pa about changing the object of meditation, he said to use the same one again. When someone asked him about what came next, he said, "There is nothing more."

Ga-ma-pa is an excellent teacher. When someone asked him what he was meditating on, he replied impermanence! Then when asked to change the object of meditation, or to delve into it deeper, what was his resultant reply? Apply this ancient method, which is the method to meditate on impermanence, and repeat it all over again, just like that. When the person who made the request says: "Already understood! Now I wish for others", he would repeat the same thing again and again. Then, what did he say in the end? This statement: "You say you want to understand deeper Dharma, sorry, it will not be of use to you at all, it is too premature for you!" Therefore, we need to understand the complete teachings of Dharma, the complete teachings of Dharma. We have talked about the sequence previously

and have made it very clear. As for the actual cultivation, it must be step by step. Do not seek for great teachings, deep teachings as one must build on the foundation step by step to progress.

[40B, 22.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P267 L9]

Regarding the earlier section on the three roots and that within each there are nine reasons, we need to spur ourselves ahead with a firm aspiration, and firmly commit it to heart, and work conscientiously hard on it and meditate again and again.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 22.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P267 L11]

This being the case, if your mind is fit, meditate in accordance with what I have explained above.

Therefore if our mind is fit and has the ability to do it, we must then meditate in accordance with what Master has explained earlier, and to do so in a step-by-step manner.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P159; 40B, 22.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P267 L13]

If it is not, take up whatever is appropriate among the nine reasons and the three roots. Meditate again and again until you have turned your mind away from the activities of this life, which are like adorning yourself while being led to the execution ground.

If let's say, we are unable to practice according to the principle stated in the previous passage, we are unable to do it, then what shall we do? We need to understand the three roots and the nine reasons, understand the meaning, apply them based on what you have seen and observe carefully, you will then discover something? Let's say the things that we are busy with. What does this mean? We are already about to die, and we are still adorning ourselves, it is just nonsensical, nonsensical. This body is about to be led to the execution ground and you still want to adorn it, make a hairdo, take a shower, is it not ridiculous? When one dies in one breath, it has nothing to do with you, yet we are experts in indulging in such meaningless things.

[40B, 24.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P268 L7]

Wait till you have really understood the point, you will develop dislike for these things. The cause of losing one's life can be attributed to being indulgent with the wrong things. As you are busy with these things, you would have committed the non-virtuous karma that will for sure lead to the path of death. We need to understand this relationship, must really understand. Hence, you need to diligently contemplate on the earlier circumstances, contemplate diligently, observe and must certainly get a correct understanding, then this disenchantment will arise. If it does not, at that time, one very important thing – is to contemplate it repeatedly! This is the inevitable step to take.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P160; 40B, 25.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P268 L13]

No matter where the teachings of reliance on a teacher, leisure and opportunity, and impermanence may occur in the Buddha's word and its commentaries, recognize that they are meant to be practiced and sustain them in meditation.

Since you wish to practice, you must understand the teachings, how to practice, as such you might as well seek the great sutras and the various commentaries. Follow the sequence of these scriptures and commentaries starting from 'Relying on a Teacher', 'Life of Leisure and Opportunity is difficult to obtain and has great significance', and the 'Rapidness of Impermanence'. Really understand the various teachings; this is what we should do right now. Yes, when we listen to it now, no doubt we feel that it is correct, but when it comes to practicing it, we still don't feel connected to it. In actual fact, this reflects a lack of understanding. Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding, we must diligently seek to find out and read widely, this is the right way of practicing. Until you are firm and resolute in your understanding, delve into it deeply in accordance with the teachings.

[40B, 26.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P269 L6]

Hence, even as we repeatedly say, there is one point we must all understand. After listening, often we say: "Ah ya, it was fine when I listened to it, but after listening, I can't do it, then how?" Of course you can't do it! If you do, you don't have to listen to it anymore. Similarly, because you can't do it, after listening, never ever give up. We must understand that everything has a cause and effect relationship. You want to

get something now, what is it? You want the effect. We want the effect, then what you must do ----- plant the cause of the fruit. What is the cause? Diligently follow the commentaries, continuously research, investigate and have a firm grasp of the key points, have a firm grasp of the key points. Then diligently contemplate and make an observation. If you are right on track with your diligence, great disenchantment will naturally arise in the near future. This is what we should correctly understand at present.

[40B, 27.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P269 L14]

Therefore, there are a few of you who might experience this. After hearing it, you find that it is quite good and then you get excited: Ah ya, right! But I cannot practice it, what should I do? This is unnecessary, unnecessary. Hence, you must be very clear on the sequence. But on the flipped side of it, while there is no need to be in a hurry, you should not drag your feet either. “Ah ya, Very happy. Eh, It was good when I listened to it earlier.” Then after that, you start to chat with other people. That’s wrong, wrong again! You must understand this very clearly: The cause and effect. If you want this effect, what you must do is to work on the cause. Therefore, after achieving this right understanding, immediately use it to examine your mind and see if it is in concordance! Let’s continue.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P160; 40B, 28.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P270 L5]

If you do so, you will easily find the intent of the Conqueror.

Then because you have adhered to the great scriptures and commentaries relating to this principle, put them into practice and understand them, you will then realize: Oh! After understanding what are the things I am in concordance with currently, what is current or what I should be diligent in future, I should further apply these during meditation. This is truly Buddha's exact guidance for us. If you can do so accordingly, you will soon attain the essence of Buddha's teachings.

[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P160; 40B, 29.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 5, P270 L10]

Understand that you must proceed in this way in the context of the other teachings as well.

The earlier and later parts are all the same. Now at this juncture, we already understand that, oh! This life of leisure and opportunity is so difficult to obtain. After obtaining it, death comes about very quickly too! You will quickly die! After death, where does one go? This is a very important question! If there is nothing after death, then it is fine! After all there is nothing! But hey, sorry, this is not the case. There is something following that. At this stage, you will also need to understand it first. After understanding, when that time comes, what kind of preparations you need to make.

**CHAPTER 10:
REFLECTING ON YOUR
FUTURE LIFE**

10 REFLECTING ON YOUR FUTURE LIFE

b' Contemplating what will occur in your future life: the happiness or suffering of the two types of beings

1' Contemplating the suffering of hell denizens

a" Contemplating the suffering of the great hells of living beings

b" Contemplating the suffering of the adjoining hells

c" Contemplating the suffering of the cold hells

d" Contemplating the suffering of the occasional hells

2' Contemplating the suffering of animals

3' Contemplating the suffering of hungry ghosts

a" Hungry ghosts who have external obstacles for obtaining food and drink

b" Hungry ghosts who have internal obstacles for obtaining food and drink

c" Hungry ghosts who have obstacles within the food and drink

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 00.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P3 L3]

b' Contemplating what will occur in your future life: the happiness or suffering of the two types of beings

This is what we should understand. Where will we go after death? Will you go to a good or a bad place? This is something we need to understand correctly.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 00.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P3 L6]

Since it is certain that you will die soon as previously mentioned, you cannot remain in this life. As you do not cease to exist after death, you will be reborn.

Here it comes! Ah, since now you [know you] are certain to die, and you will die very quickly. Not only will you die very quickly, at the time of death, with whatever things you possess now, at the moment of death, it's like a dream. Ah! It is entirely meaningless. We don't even need to wait until the moment of death. We can take a look now and think back on the last few decades of your life, what is left from the earlier parts of your life? Ah! Nothing. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, this is absolutely the truth. If you understand this point, you won't have to wait until death. This is the situation at death, isn't it? It is just like this. Therefore, once you understand it, you won't be busy doing things for the present! Well then we would begin to talk about what comes later. What comes later? Sorry! Later does not mean that there is nothing after death, it continues onward. At that time, you will then need to take a look! At that time, you will need to take a look at what's ahead of you.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 01.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P4 L6]

Furthermore, you will be reborn in either a happy or a miserable realm, because there is no birthplace other than among these two types of beings.

In the future, where will you go? There are only two roads, only two roads to take: one leads to the happy realm and the other, the miserable realm. In the happy realm, you will enjoy happiness and in the miserable realm, you will bear suffering. That's the way it is!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 02.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P4 LL6]

Since you are controlled by your karma and cannot choose where you will be born, you will be reborn in the manner in which your virtuous and non-virtuous karma impel you to be reborn.

Well, then whether you will end up in the happy realms or the miserable realms in the future, can you make that decision for yourself? Sorry! You cannot decide for yourself. This is something that we clearly and plainly know, none of us can decide for ourselves. In fact, though we believe this, however, it seems we can't feel it, and would say, "The time hasn't come yet! The time hasn't come yet!" This is true. How will we die at the time of death? Where will we go? Indeed, the time hasn't come yet. However, this kind of experience is something we can experience right now. How can you experience it? Death, in our entire stream of life, is just a moment in time, and marking the end of a segment. Yet our whole life continues within this continuum of mind

stream, flowing from a beginningless past to an endless future, it never stops.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 03.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P5 L2]

For instance, for the moment that we can have a feeling for, it is the present moment. This is something that everyone can feel. May I ask: for this present segment of time, can you control where you will go next? Maybe some people will say, "I can." Sorry! You cannot. I say, "You cannot." We have already discussed this question a few times before. When I say, "You cannot," you accept this and say "I cannot." Of course you cannot. But then when I say, "You cannot," and you respond with this, "I can." May I ask: when you are saying "I can," aren't you responding to me? That makes you the passive one. You are still the passive one [having to react to me]. Ah! When I said "You cannot" and you said what? "I can." What is this thing that you are saying when you say "I can?" You are responding to what I said to you, thus rendering you the passive one (having to react to me). Since you are passive, may I ask then, are you the initiator or are you the passive one? Is this reasoning clear? Isn't it right? Yes! This means that you are passive even when you are conscious, let alone the muddleheaded times. This is from the theoretical point of view.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 04.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P5 L10]

Now we can look at actual scenarios. For an actual scenario, such as when you are in great pain from sickness, um, ah (moaning in pain), can you tell the pain to stop? No! When you are hungry, can you tell yourself not to bother with it? No! With anything in front of you, upon looking at them, can you tell yourself not to be attached, would it work? No! Can you tell yourself not to generate hostility be angry, would it work? No! When you are dozing off, and you try to tell yourself to raise your head, you just can't! May I ask, is there anything you can decide for yourself? Aren't things laid out very plainly in front of us! Even though we are chatting here, with what you're going to say next, you don't know either. You are just following the circumstances, moving forward in a stream of karma, right? Therefore, in reality, with what truly projects us forward, why is it called karma? Isn't it called projecting karma! There, such is karma! It is that you have no control at all because everything is completely dependent on this thing. This is karma. Therefore, this is what we truly wish to cultivate. Therefore, **"since you are controlled by your karma,"** what projects and leads you forward, what is that? Karma. We are completely dependent on this thing, it makes your decision for you. Well then there are two kinds of karma, one is virtuous and the other one, non-virtuous. This is the thing that impels you to move forward!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 05.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P6 L5]

Therefore, through this we need to understand an extremely important fact, every step follows closely after the previous one. They are related and cannot be separated. A body of leisure and opportunity will die very quickly, and after death, you do not determine where you will go for your next life. The one that makes the decision and leads you to your next life is the karma you've committed. And your karma can be virtuous or non-virtuous. Now we need to analyze and contemplate a little, we need to understand them.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 06.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P6 LL6]

This being the case, contemplate the suffering of the miserable realms, thinking, "How would it be if I were born in a miserable realm?"

Since there are only two roads to take, well then let us take a look first at what happens if you do go to miserable realms? Perhaps some people might ask, "Eh, why don't we think about the happy realms first? It's possible that we go to the happy realms." This does make sense. However we need to know that for anything, "if you prepare ahead, you will be successful." If you prepare ahead, there is no wrong in that. When we really prepare, we always prepare for what could go wrong. The good things are what you [wish and] supplicate for anyway, right? No need to prepare. Why prepare for it? What we should really prepare for is the worst case scenarios. That's what's really important. This is very plain and clear. Therefore the same goes here, you prepare to not end up going somewhere bad. If you are well prepared for this, then in the future you will only go to good places. To go to the good places, it is what you hope for!

Therefore you needn't worry about that ahead of time, what you should really worry about is, oh, you want to avoid going to a bad place. Therefore, over here it speaks of the bad first.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 07.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P7 L4]

Contemplate the suffering of the miserable realms

You want to first think about the situation in “**the various miserable realms**,” and how should you deal with them? Think about the sufferings there. If you understand this kind of suffering, then you will think, “Ah! So much suffering, no one wants to go there.” You then further understand that for this suffering, the reason you are led there is because of the karma you've created. Since it's karma created by yourself, so it is still up to you. Therefore, while you are still living, you will strive to avoid creating [non-virtuous karma], then naturally you will not have to bear such suffering. This is why he elucidates this. For the entire teaching that Buddha imparted, this is the reason why he explained suffering first. He lets you understand it first, and you will quickly strive, take advantage of the time now and strive. After you've done creating virtuous karma, when you do go (when you die) — great! You will be happy.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 08.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P7 LL4]

This is a fact that we can all understand, whether it is happiness or suffering now, it will become nothing at the time of death. However, if you create much non-virtuous karma now and you are greedy for only temporal happiness, this

happiness will amount to nothing, and you will suffer the future. Ah, that would be suffering! On the contrary, though you strive and experience a little hardship now, at the time of death, there is not much to this hardship anymore, but the happiness that it will bring about later will be great. Isn't that a very good thing? Therefore at this particular place, this is the real reason it asks us to contemplate the suffering of the miserable realms first. Therefore, let us take a look first, after this life is done, the place we will go next – look at the places of suffering.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 09.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P8 L3]

As the protector Nagarjuna says:

Reflect daily on the hells,

Both those extremely hot and cold. Reflect also on the hungry ghosts Emaciated by hunger and thirst.

Observe and reflect on the animals

Overcome by the suffering of stupidity.

Eliminate the causes of these and create the causes of happiness.

A human body in this world is difficult to obtain. Once you have it, diligently stop The causes of miserable rebirths.

It tells us the thing that we should really do; what should we really do? This is what we should do. We just talked about that we may also go to a good place. This is much like the

previous section of mindfulness of death, whether we will die today or not, it's uncertain. But for our own benefit, we absolutely cannot think that we won't die. Contrarily, we have to think that we will die today. Similarly, with these two places of suffering and happiness, it's uncertain where we will go in the future, but we must certainly think about the place of suffering. Why? Because as soon as you think you will die today, you engage in practice immediately. Then when you think that you will certainly go to a place of suffering in the future, you will strive to practice even more desperately. As a result of practice, you will go to a place of happiness. The more you think, the better your practice and the happier you will be. Isn't that just what you want? This is how we humans, those who have obtained the life of leisure and opportunity, truly differ from animals, and how we are better than the animals. Regarding this point, after you understand it, then for every section that we will come across later, a very concordant and useful effect is then generated.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 10.60; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P8 LL2]

Therefore, “**reflect daily.**” This daily, not only is it every day, but every moment! All day long, this is what we should be really analyzing and reflecting in our minds. What should we think about? Ah, the hot and cold hells. Ah-ya, it's terrible! The cold hells and hot hells are truly miserable! The following section will explain them in detail. At that time, we wouldn't be able to stand it at all! Many of us always think: Ah-ya, this is not okay and that is not okay either! Ah, later you would say you are hungry, and it's not okay when you are hungry. Then when you are full, it's not okay when you are full either. Then if you become a little sick, that's not ok

either. Actually, for all the things we experience in the world, if you compare them to what you would have to experience in hell, no matter how great the suffering is in this world, ah, it is like being in heaven when you compare it to hell! Therefore, before we understand, it

is truly very difficult to bring up the urge to practice. But once you truly understand it, even if you are experiencing so much pain now that it forces you to crawl on the ground, you will still desperately strive to practice. This is absolutely the truth. Therefore, this point is something we must know, must know!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 12.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P9 L7]

I have seen too many practitioners of the past and modern times. All the real practitioners have set this example for us. If you ask him not to practice, he can't do it. No matter how difficult and tough things are, he is able to exhort himself. Well then why is it that we can't do that? I need to bring something up here. What is the reason? That is because normally our karmic obscurations are too weighty. Therefore we would often say, "Ah-ya, my karmic obscurations are too weighty!" With this being said, if you do not understand the principles, for people in general, this becomes the best excuse. It's also a fact. But after you truly understand the principle, you then absolutely cannot continue to say this. What is the result of having weighty karmic obscuration, what is it? To fall [into miserable realms]. We ask you to practice now when you are happy, yet you cannot bring up the urge, cannot make progress and you use weighty karmic obscuration as an excuse. When you do fall into miserable realms, what would that be like?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 13.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P9 LL2]

We people are always greedy for a little something, taking a little advantage of things now. No matter how great your karmic obscuration is, you should think of this often, if all of a sudden a great earth quake strikes, bam! Everything is turned upside down, ah! You would be the first to run! I think every one of us has a feel for this. What is the real reason here? It is that we have not gained a real feel, an experience for this in accordance with the teachings. The reason we cannot fulfill this experience according to the teachings is because we have weighty karmic obscuration. Once you truly understand this, even those who do not have weighty karmic obscuration will desperately try to practice. If you are the one with weighty karmic obscuration and do not practice, then sufferings will immediately ensue! Thus after you understand that your karmic obscuration is weighty, you will strive even more, and work even harder. This is absolutely the truth! This then is really having reached a correct understanding. After understanding it correctly, this is the inevitable result! Once you understand this point, you will then try even harder to find methods to resolve this problem and exhort yourself to practice. Therefore, after all that is said, the most important concept overall is that our view is skewed, we have not obtained the correct view. This is the foremost important issue in cultivation.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P161; 41A, 14.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P10 L7]

Therefore earlier we talked about hell, next would be hungry ghosts, then animals. This is what we should strive to observe. When we see the sufferings of the miserable realms, what should we do now? **“Eliminate the causes of these,”** we should eliminate the non-virtuous causes, purify our obscurations and then work hard at accumulating the collections of merits, to engage in all kinds of virtues. If you wish to purify obscurations and practice to accumulate all kinds of virtuous karma, you will have to rely on a human life of leisure and opportunity. Yet today, you have obtained it. Therefore, this is the time when you need to quickly strive, **“diligently stop the causes of miserable rebirths!”** When you stop the causes of miserable rebirths, it is the time that you are creating virtuous karma. This is what Nagarjuna Bodhisattva, what Nagarjuna Bodhisattva tells us.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 15.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P10 LL2]

It is extremely important to meditate in general on the sufferings of cyclic existence and, in particular, on the sufferings of the miserable realms,

Regarding this point then, thus when we practice, we will certainly need to use the principle of suffering to exhort ourselves. For the principle of suffering, it is divided into two parts. One is that [in general] the sufferings of the entire cyclic existence, it is devoid of any merit. In particular what? The sufferings of the miserable realms. This is the most important, most important. It is also the main principle in the learning of Buddhism. Therefore, when Buddha was reborn,

he first told us the truth of sufferings and then the causes of sufferings.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 16.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P11 L3]

for if you contemplate how you have fallen into the ocean of suffering, you will then turn away from it, and thereby overcome your pride and arrogance.

First, if you can contemplate in accordance with the teaching on falling into miserable realms in the future, and that you are within cyclic existence now, yet there is not a single good thing in this cyclic existence. Though we have obtained the human body, yet particularly with this, falling into the three miserable realms in the future, it is extremely terrifying! As we think of this, ah! We will develop a great disenchantment for everything. Once you have developed this disenchantment, all kinds of problems that you face now will be solved! The reason we cannot solve these problem is due to the notion of “self.” As soon as there is the “self,” all problem ensue—pride and arrogance. We will always see ourselves as being high up, will always look down on others, always give rise to attachment, always give rise to hostility, and always give rise to ignorance. All of these will be removed! All those [maintenance of] social relations and those things that we are unable to let go of, all of these are abandoned! This is the first one.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 17.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P11 LL5]

Seeing suffering as the result of non-virtuous karma, you will be careful to avoid sins and infractions. Since you want happiness, not suffering, and understand that happiness is the result of virtue, you enjoy cultivating virtue.

One step further, it says that upon seeing the pains in this ocean of suffering, you thus become disenchanted. And then, you seek to find the reason for such suffering. Oh! It comes from having created many various non-virtuous causes, and thus fruiting into non-virtuous effects. Since creating non-virtuous karma will issue the effect of suffering, you will feel ashamed for committing sins. Ah! I would feel that how could I have been this way, after being born as a human, reckon a relatively intelligently one, yet I have been so incredibly foolish for not even understanding this principle. Can I still be counted as a human being? Ah, I feel so ashamed! Therefore, though normally we are used to reproaching others, these sorts of things will [naturally] subside. [Since] we have been practicing for a long time and we still haven't accomplished anything, a feeling of shame thus rises.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 18.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P12 L4]

At the same time, because we are afraid of suffering and wish for happiness, how does happiness come about? Ah! Due to cultivating many virtues, therefore “**you enjoy cultivating virtue.**” What do we do now? Eh, we speak of cultivation. Ah, truly cannot bring up the urge! Ah, when we ask you to practice, you really can't bring up the urge! Why is it that you can't bring it up? You are greedy for a little

happiness. This greediness (or attachment) to happiness, to want happiness is absolutely something that everyone wants. In fact, I'm more afraid that you aren't greedy for happiness, if you aren't attached to happiness, I can't do a thing about you. If you are after happiness, then you need to go a step further to ask, where does happiness come from? Eh, happiness comes from cultivation! Since it comes from cultivation, you will then be willing to practice. Therefore, the reason we cannot truly practice is not because we are greedy for happiness, but that we don't know this principle. Thus if we truly wish to cultivate, we must cultivate according to the teachings, truly understand and say, "Oh, this happiness comes from cultivation. Sufferings are avoided through cultivation!" At that time, you will certainly strive to practice. This is spoken with respect to the self.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 19.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P12 LL2]

Once you have assessed your own condition, you develop compassion for others. After you have turned away from cyclic existence, you develop an aspiration for liberation. Frightened by suffering, you fervently go for refuge in the three jewels.

Here it goes another step further! Since you feel the pains and sufferings of cyclic existence and wish for happiness for yourself. And then, you begin to extend your feelings to others, "**once you have assessed your own condition,**" you begin to consider others, that's when you are able to give rise to compassion. Through compassion you develop the great spirit of enlightenment. This is the further step where disenchantment can incite the spirit of enlightenment,

thus making you advance in the levels one after the other. Therefore in conclusion, **“After you have turned away from cyclic existence, you develop an aspiration for liberation. Frightened by suffering, you fervently go for refuge to the three jewels.”** Then when you formally begin to practice, why do you wish to practice? It is because you understand the pains and sufferings of cyclic existence, and thus generating disenchantment. You become disenchanted with cyclic existence and aspire for liberation. To be liberated, how can you be liberated? Ah! Thus understanding you need to find the method for liberation, which is finding the Three Jewels as our refuge. You then have found a point of entry for your cultivation. All these things come from what? They began with [knowing] suffering. Therefore,

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 21.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P13 L7]

Meditation on suffering is the great summary that includes these and many other key points of practice.

Therefore regarding this thing, on meditation of suffering, it includes all kinds of things, many important key points of cultivation. **“Great summary”** means a key outline. The Sanskrit (or Tibetan?) meaning of summary is a verse. There are different explanations of it. What this place says is that the main principles, the key points are all within knowing the suffering, understanding the suffering and meditating on suffering. Next, the text cites from the commentary.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 21.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P13 LL4]

Similarly, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:²⁷⁷

Since without suffering there is no determination to be free, your mind, stay fixed!

You should know that without suffering, there will be no determination to be free. Because you have suffering, thus making you want to escape from suffering. That's when you will develop disenchantment. Therefore, you should stay fixed on suffering. Actually, true cultivation is not a happy thing, it's a hardship. True cultivation is done for the purpose of obtaining happiness. If you are greedy for [temporal] happiness, the result is you will end up obtaining suffering. Therefore, what's really important, it never separates from suffering and happiness, these two things. And when we cultivate, it is precisely for these two things. This is something we should understand. The reason we normally can't engage in practice is also because of suffering and happiness, these two things. The reason we engage in practice is also for suffering and happiness, these two things. The key point is not to just talk about suffering and happiness. The key point is whether we understand the real truth of suffering and happiness and whether we understand how to obtain happiness and eliminate suffering. This is what's really important for us. Therefore, this is why we must be earnest in learning the teaching. The reason is this. Otherwise, though you are practicing, without knowing the principles, even if you are ordained, you will spend your life

here for nothing. In the end, you will still have to endure boundless suffering. This is the most pitiful thing.

【又云：「復次苦功德，厭離除憍傲，悲愍生死者，羞惡樂善行。」】

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 23.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P14 L6]

And also:

**Furthermore, the good qualities of suffering are that you
Dispel arrogance with your disenchantment,
Develop compassion for the beings of cyclic existence,
Carefully avoid sin, and delight in virtue.**

Normally we say “there are five good qualities to suffering.” Suffering has some particularly important benefits, namely the five good qualities. The first one is that it can help you develop “**disenchantment**” which is the foremost important thing in cultivation. Then, it can “**dispel arrogance.**” The first great obstacle to practice is arrogance. Though you want to develop disenchantment, but if the mind of arrogance persists, “the water of teaching cannot stay atop the great mountain of pride.” Through understanding suffering, one can eliminate that. This is from the point of view of benefiting the self. Furthermore, in benefitting others, it will also come from [knowing] the suffering for oneself and beginning to consider others in one’s own place. Therefore, you “**develop compassion for the beings of cyclic existence.**” I would commiserate those who are like me, drifting in cyclic

existence. This is the third one. Therefore, due to this understanding, you will formally begin to eliminate sins, purify obscurations and would also create virtues, accumulate the collections [of merits and wisdom]. Thus, **“carefully avoid sin, and delight in virtue.”** All these benefits come from [knowing] suffering. Therefore, when Buddha appeared in this world, he said, “This is suffering! You should know.” Oh, you should understand this suffering and you must begin by knowing the sufferings.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 24.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P15 L1]

And further:

Overwhelmed by fear,

I offer myself to Samantabhadra.

Yes, this is how a practitioner is, he still succumbs to fear. [But] what does he fear? He fears suffering! He fears suffering and so he wishes to evade suffering. In order to evade suffering, what is the only thing one can do? One has to rely on the Three Jewels, and so **“I offer myself to Samantabhadra.”**

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 25.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P15 L4]

Although *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* discusses these qualities of suffering from the viewpoint of suffering experienced in the past, the same qualities characterize future suffering as well. [116]

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 25.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P15 L5]

For the principles explained above, as written in *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, they primarily explain the ways of suffering produced in this life. However, we should know that the sufferings we will have to bear in the future will also be like this! It will be also like this! More importantly, we know from the previous section that the current suffering and happiness will be gone soon, but what will come in the future is what's important. Therefore, what's more important to us is to contemplate the sufferings of the miserable realms. This is the real great suffering. With a little suffering now, we can still take it. For this great suffering of the future, it is definitely something we must avoid. Thus at this particular point, we need to contemplate the sufferings of the miserable realms.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P162; 41A, 26.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P15 LL2]

1' Contemplating the suffering of hell denizens

2' Contemplating the suffering of animals

3' Contemplating the suffering of hungry ghosts

Well then within the sufferings, the sufferings of the miserable realms can be divided into three parts: the suffering of hell denizens, animals, and hungry ghosts. The suffering of hell denizens can be further divided into four parts:

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P163; 41A, 26.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P16 L1]

a" Contemplating the suffering of the great hells of living beings

b" Contemplating the suffering of the adjoining hells

c" Contemplating the suffering of the cold hells

d" Contemplating the suffering of the occasional hells

Now here the text will explain it one by one, explain it one by one. Regarding this portion on hell, I think I won't go into detail here. This is something everyone will want to look over thoroughly. You want to look over it thoroughly yourself. Well then when you formally begin to practice, this portion is very important. When you formally begin to practice, you might want to look over this carefully. When you first look at it, it may be a little vague for you. At that time, you need to make sure you understand it. After you understand it, then when you formally practice, with whatever that you concord with, then upon that, you contemplate and analyze that particular suffering. At that time, what would develop in your mind stream? You will develop an extremely great feeling of being threatened by this suffering. Ah! You will feel the threat of suffering, and you will feel like you can't take this threat. At this time, an extremely powerful force will compel you to practice. Therefore, since it's easy to understand these words here and that's why I won't explain it here, won't explain it here, as long as you follow through to read it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P163; 41A, 27.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P16 LL4]

Next here I will briefly, there are a few things that I wish to expound on. Inside the hell realm, it is divided into a few areas. The great hells of living beings are the hot hells. Then outside the hot hells, there are adjoining hells. Every hell is like a walled city, a square. Then outside of each wall, there are four adjoining hells. That is outside of every great hell, there are 16 [adjoining] hells. So it is layer by layer, and hard to imagine the immeasurable sufferings that one will have to forbear, immeasurable sufferings! When you read through this there is something in there you need to pay attention to! No one wishes to go to hell. When one goes, it's not as if he is really seeing it, seeing the suffering and then he goes there. He goes to find happiness. But because his bad karma enshrouds him, thus despite hoping to find happiness, he ends up finding misery. This concept, we need to first recognize it. After we recognize it, then when we learn later on, when we get to the principles of karma, this will become very clear for you.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P163; 41A, 28.60; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P17 LL4]

Things we are busy for now are none other than what? He was looking for happiness. If you do not get a clear understanding now, you would do the wrong things, and create karma for hell. Then when you are about to enter hell, you will still feel that you are there to look for happiness. Yet, just one more step will take you to hell. And when that time comes, you are not allowed to back track. You can only

move forward. This is something we should really understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P19 L1]

Why do I bring this up? What is the reason for creating all kinds of bad karma and not being able to practice, why? You are pursuing happiness! Sorry! You want to pursue happiness!

Yet, in the end, it is hell that is waiting for you. Therefore, the reason you've been pursuing happiness but end up finding hell is due to nothing other than the karma you've created for yourself. Even Yama, anyone, even Buddha cannot do anything about that. They absolutely cannot add sufferings to you. Well then why do you create that kind of karma? Ignorance. To really remedy this, there is only one method for it. Learn the teachings, rely on the excellent Teacher, obtain the correct view, then you are able to turn it around. This concept is very important. Therefore he tells us later that for the beings that fall into the realm, they may be looking for a place to live, or looking for a place of happiness, but when they enter, ah! As soon as they enter, it's over! This is the first thing I want to bring up here.

The second one, what's the life span of the beings in those places? Please open to the second paragraph on page 88; the second paragraph on page 88, line 8. (English text is Page 164, the 13th line from the last line.)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 01.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P20 L1]

The duration of these sufferings is explained

It says that for such immense suffering of this magnitude, what's the duration of it?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 01.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P20 L2]

in the *Friendly Letter*:²⁷⁹

Even though you experience

Such horrible sufferings for a billion years,

You do not die

Until the non-virtue is spent.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 01.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P20 L4]

Let's read the following explanations.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 01.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P20 L5]

Thus, you must experience these sufferings until the force of your karma is exhausted.

The suffering in this place, it is extreme and long in duration, ah, terribly long! How long is it? It depends on your karma. For your karma, until your non-virtuous karma is exhausted, sorry! One would have to stay in this place until then. Therefore, one would have to stay for a length of time as dictated by the karma. With however much karma you've

created, you would have to endure as much suffering. Though going there completely depends on the karma that an individual creates, but the duration of stay also depends on the karma. Thus, we are greedy for a little suffering now, and later, we will have to endure long eons of non-virtuous effects. That is so not worthwhile. People are just so foolish, people are just so foolish! Ah! One is greedy for one bite of food now, yet when one enters the hells in the future and be filled with liquid copper and hot iron, one will have no idea how long of a period that would be.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 03.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P20 LL2]

Some people would say, “Ah, what’s written in the sutra is just a convenient method to exhort us! Actually, this kind of saying is like poisons! This kind of saying is most terrifying! Nowadays, many people would say this, even many Teachers. The *Great Final Nirvana Sutra* clearly states this, the *Great Final Nirvana Sutra* clearly states this, do not mistaken what Buddha said as a convenient method! Buddha told us that once a monk commits duskrta sins, he will fall [into the miserable realms] and suffer greatly. This is definitely not just a convenient method but the absolute truth! You should thoroughly read [the sutra]. Why was this stated in the *Great Final Nirvana Sutra*? Just before Buddha left, this was like a final will, a special advice and explication. This is most important! Why is it called the teaching which supports the rules and speaks of the eternal, i.e., the Great Final Nirvana Sutra? The reason is exactly this. If you really want to practice, this is the fundamental. It was so at the beginning and when he gave you his advice at the end, he

still spoke of this. Therefore, this is something we should understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 04.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P21 L7]

Well then within the hells, in the best hell (meaning the hell of the least harm), you can calculate it. I had calculated this number before. There are a total of eight great hells and the last one is the Unrelenting Hell. Ah! We won't talk about that. Then, to go up the levels from the last Unrelenting Hell, one by one, until the first one, it would be the Reviving Hell. How long is the lifespan in the Reviving Hell? I am going to read the number to you and you think about it! One six two zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero, zero (1,620,000,000,000) human years. Then, let me count it, thousand, million, a hundred million, and then hundred billion, so it's one hundred six two billion. One hundred? Am I right? Thousand, million, billion, no! It's one trillion. One trillion six hundred twenty billion years! The Reviving Hell, as soon as you fall into it, it takes so long, so long! However, after we become ordained, there are many times that we commit sins without realizing it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 05.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P21 LL2]

May I ask, no matter how great your happiness is now, is it worth it? For the pursuit of happiness and evasion of suffering, ah! So when I think about it, it's really not worthwhile! It's really not worthwhile! That's why I feel so happy here. Everyone shouldn't be looking at someone else

being lazy and as if you have to suffer for it instead. I don't think like that at all.

When I see people being lazy, I would think that this is a great excellent Teacher telling me, nah, nah, nah, look at this result of his foolishness, it is stated right here. I don't want to be like that! When he is lazy, then it's just right for me to do this to gain merit. I'm really happy and will go ahead to do the task. On the other hand, there are very diligent people here. Ah! When I see them, I am really touched. That's why I often praise so and so monk very much. Don't just look at his senior age, he would be the only person who qualifies to sit, eat and do nothing. Yesterday, after we ended the session and took a rest, he was the only person downstairs. When he saw the branches fall from the tree, he swept them away. I was upstairs when I saw this and it touched me so much that it brought tears to my eyes. Ah, an excellent Teacher! Now, for our strong and able-bodied young men here, after the session, they were either chatting nonsense or sleeping. Ah, when I saw that, I shuddered with fear! Therefore, at these times, we should really exhort ourselves to read more.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P166; 41B, 06.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P22 LL6]

Thus, here I wanted to say that the lifespan is so long, the lifespan is so long! When he entered the place, what was it like? He was looking for happiness, was looking for happiness. Yes! If you are looking for happiness, this is your happiness, a happiness which came from the wrong way. Once you fall, ah, we don't even have to mention 100 million something human years, even 100 million human

years will be hard for you. Even one million years, one thousand years, no need to say one thousand years, even one day of it, do you think you can take it? You can't take it! Needless to say. One day, when you feel that you've been wronged, ah, you can't even take just a few minutes of sufferings. If we ask you to eat one meal lesser today, you couldn't take it. No need to mention eating one less meal. Even if your food is slightly worse off today, you can't take it. Think about it, can we then take this kind of suffering? Therefore, we people are really foolish! If we didn't eat as well today, we would be bickering in our mind. Ah, people really don't know what they are doing. That's why they are foolish, too foolish! Well then the above portion explained this thing in particular. This is the hot hells [portion]. Then there are the cold hells. I won't go into them.

Then, for the following section, I think there are a few things here that I want to explain in particular. Please open up to page 92, the 7th line, starting from the *Friendly Letter*, second half of the 7th line. (English text is Page 169, Line 5.)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 08.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P23 L6]

***The Friendly Letter.*²⁹¹**

Just as among all kinds of happiness

The cessation of craving is the king of happinesses, [124]

It says among all kinds of happiness, which is the happiest? “**The cessation of craving**” is the happiest among all kinds of happiness. What is the cessation of craving? Na, that means if we can really eliminate our cravings, this is the happiest kind of happiness. Thus, we would often talk about

emptiness, emptiness, emptiness. I don't really like to talk about emptiness to those who just started learning Buddhism, [but instead] I prefer to tell them about happiness derived from suffering. Precisely due to your needs of happiness derived from suffering, you have to practice. The greatest happiness is to be rid of, to be purified of all of our cravings of the mundane world, the happiness of the three worlds. This happiness is the cessation of craving, it is then the happiest. This is it. But what does it depend on? Cultivation! Therefore, though you have a little hardship now, yes, the happiness you will obtain in the future is incredible. Cultivation is just like this. You have to invest some capital now! You may put down one hundred thousand or eighty thousand now but your return in the future will be immeasurable. If you don't cultivate, for the happiness you obtain now, ah, if it can be measured, you would have [only] obtained three hundred or five hundred. However, the cost you will pay for this, ah, immeasurable! This is what we should understand. Well then happiness is like this, how about suffering?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 09.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P24 L3]

So among all kinds of suffering

The suffering of the Unrelenting Hell is most fierce.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P164; 41B, 09.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P24 L4]

The suffering of the Unrelenting Hell is the most fierce.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 10.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P24 L5]

The suffering of being viciously pierced

With three hundred lances for a full day Cannot compare, cannot even be mentioned, With the least sufferings of hell.

This says that there are three hundred lances, the sharpest blades, and they “ka-ka!” They viciously pierce your body, continuously piercing. Ah! none of us can bear this. Not to mention three hundred lances. Even if we just pierce ourselves with a knife, it does not have to be viciously, but just doing so lightly. Perhaps not even using a lance, but to just use a needle to prick ourselves, ah, we can’t bear that! When we get a shot, ah, we would wrinkle up. [Yet] this benefits us! Then with something so painful [as described in the text], when you compare this suffering to ones in hell, if you compare it to the least suffering of hell, “**Cannot compare, cannot even be mentioned, with the least sufferings of hell!**” You can’t even make the comparison. It is not even comparable to one ten thousandth suffering of hell. The suffering is that immense! It is that severe!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 11.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P24 LL2]

Therefore everyone pay attention here. The suffering in hell is very serious, very serious! Therefore I often say if you cannot seriously practice in depth after you are ordained, do not take it up! Lay practitioners may not fall [into miserable realms], but if a renunciate does not practice, it’s extremely

easy for you to fall [into miserable realms]. You will certainly fall. This is number one. Then with sins which would put you in the Unrelenting Hell, the lay men may not necessarily commit them. Though most lay men will create karma that lead to hell, but it's the easiest for renunciate to commit karma that lead to the Unrelenting Hell, the worst case being slandering the teachings. We don't even know when we are slandering the teachings. Sorry! We often think that we understand this principle, and then we the Mahayana deride those in Hinayana. Those in Hinayana deride ones in Mahayana. Those who recite Buddha's name deride those who learn Zen. People who study Zen slander them back. Now there is one more. People of the Southern and Northern traditions are mixed together now and each would say their teaching is better. The day before yesterday someone gave me a book written by a Bhikshu from the Southern tradition. Ah! After I read it my heart ached. Personally, I wholeheartedly wish to gather all of the teachings Buddha left behind, of course this includes our Northern tradition, both the North and South traditions, and perhaps even the Tibetan traditions. Then we will always observe the merits of others, and think of improving ourselves. Like that. Then about our own shortcomings, to the best of our abilities, we ameliorate. We absolutely do not want to engage in telling others' faults. Even just the casual mention of others' faults would have committed the sin of deriding the teaching! I just want to bring this up while we are here.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 12.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P25 LL5]

Especially now there are many who are out for their own benefit. Oh! When he instructs, he would place great

emphasis and say, “This is very important!” But in fact, why did he emphasize it? For his own benefit. This is even more horrendous! For things like this, as soon as everyone examines himself, and pay attention, one will see that it’s very easy, very easy to engage in this. It is for gaining a little profit, and you so praise this act. “Ah, offering is very good, much benefit!” If you truly praise the act of offering, it’s good, of course it’s good! But you must clearly examine your purpose, why do you praise this. If it’s for them to come and offer to you, then this kind of praising, you absolutely do not want to engage in this kind of praising! This is very clear and obvious. Therefore, this is why for us who instruct the teachings, when we open our mouths, we must first examine what kind of attitude we have. This concept is very important. Let us continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 13.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P26 L3]

Know that the sole cause of such sufferings is your physical, verbal, and mental wrongdoing.

Na! All kinds of great sufferings mentioned above come from what cause? Nothing else but our physical, verbal, and mental wrongdoing, this is something we do by ourselves, something we do by ourselves.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P169; 41B, 14.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P26 L6]

Strive with whatever human skill you have not to be defiled by even the slightest wrongdoing.

Once you understand this, then you will want to give your best effort to exhort yourself to never be defiled by even the slightest wrongdoing, never ever be defiled. I just wanted to explain this part. Then the following next is on the sufferings of animals. We will not go over the part on sufferings of animals.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 14.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P26 LL5]

Then the next section is the suffering of hungry ghost. [We'll treat it in] the same fashion. So please open up to the fourth scroll. Please open up to page 95, line 6. (English text is Page 172, Line 8.)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 15.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P26 LL3]

Also contemplate what Candragomin's *Letter to a Student* says:²⁹⁹

Tormented by a terrible thirst, they see a pure stream

From afar and desire to drink it. When they arrive,

It changes into a river filled with a mixture of oyster shells,

Strands of hair, and putrid pus, a cesspool of blood and excrement.

This is referring to the hungry ghost. This thirst of the hungry ghost, ah! For eons, they do not even hear the mention of

rivers. They are so thirsty that their throats burn continuously. Then from far away they [finally] see it. Ah! There is a river but when they run there, it (the river) changes. Ah! [It is filled with] all sorts of filth. Let's continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 15.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P27 L3]

If they go to the top of a cool hill with moist spring breezes

And a grove of verdant sandalwood trees,

It becomes for them a forest fire enveloped in leaping flames And heaped with falling, burning logs.

This place makes you so thirsty and it's so hot. Ah! Many torments. Then when he sees a river there and runs to it...oh! This thing is too foul-smelling and rotten, you can't drink it. And then he sees some place, ah! This place seems very pleasant with some breeze and very good shades from the trees but when he runs there, this place flames up all around, leaving burned logs. Let's continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 16.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P27 LL7]

When they go to a seashore covered

With clear, glittering foam from crashing waves,

It becomes for them a wasteland

Blasted by hot sand, dark mist, and a searing wind.

Dwelling in that place, they long for rain clouds to appear,

Whereupon there issues from the clouds a rain of iron arrows,

Smoking cinders, and sparkling, diamond-hard boulders,

And, one after the other, gold and orange lightning bolts fall on their bodies like rain. For those afflicted by heat even a snowstorm is hot; [128] For those tormented by wind even fire is cold.

This entire universe appears upside down to these hungry ghosts Confused by the fruition of terrible karma.

These 4 sets of verses, each has 4 phrases. We first see the actual conditions. He said that in hell there are two kinds, or...we don't necessarily have to talk about hell, anyway, all of these things are the effects of karma. One has to endure all sorts of sufferings. There is one kind of suffering which makes you extremely hot. When you are extremely hot, eh, here is an interesting effect! When the snow floats down and touches the body, if this happened to us when we are really hot, we would feel the coolness and iciness. But what does he feel? Hey, when he touches snow, he is still unbearably hot. On the contrary, when it's really cold, such as when we feel really cold, we would make a fire and obtain warmth. But when he is cold, even if he uses the fire, he is still unbearably cold! Why is that? It is "**the fruition of terrible karma.**" When the karma ripens, I'm sorry! Everything is reversed, everything is reversed. You can do nothing about it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 18.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P28 L4]

So up to this point, we might think, could it be like that? It could very well be like that! We don't have such terrible and coarse karma [now] but we can look for many signs and traces [of karma] to understand it. I've asked you to do an experiment the day before yesterday. I asked you to take a look at the ants, when they are crawling around, "dong, dong, dong," you might want to try taking some food that ants like and give to them. Have any of you tried this? Raise your hand if you have, have you? Oh what a pity! Ah, no one has tried this! Ah? You have tried? After you tried it, how did you feel? Let me tell you, this is why with what I've told you, they weren't just empty words. I hope you will learn diligently. You want to listen well and don't just let it go in one ear and out the other! You know how you are yourself.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 19.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P28 LL6]

When an ant is running around, "dong, dong ,dong", there can be a few types of situations. One is that it is comfortably running around. Then when you put something in front of it, it will run to that thing. When the ant does run to the food, the ant will eat the food because that's what the ant has been looking for. Thus the karma being manifested at that moment in the ant is looking for something to eat. When the ant sees it, the ant eats it. Another type of situation is if you tease the ant first. Once the ant is teased, eh, it will raise the two antennas and be ready to fight you. Then if you pushed it aside, it will run away in a hurry! At this time, what is manifesting in its mind? It is preparing to either escape or

fight. Therefore, no matter how good the food is in front of the ant, as soon as it touches the food, the ant will immediately turn around and leave. Then when you try to block the ant [with the food], as soon as the ant sees the food, the ant will immediately turn around and leave. You can do this experiment yourself. There are always reasons for me to be telling you to do these experiments. Do learn well!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 20.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P29 L3]

Then when you see ants [behave this way], you might in turn want to look at yourself. Usually with your favourite food if at the moment of eating, I scold you and say, “You act just like an animal. Your cultivation is poor! You just like to eat and are lazy!” At the time, perhaps at the beginning of the scolding, you think, ah, some scolding is fine but at the end, when you’re scolded enough where you’ve developed anger, if you are being offered food to eat at this point, you will pick it up and throw it down! Do you believe that? It’s true right? I think every one of us knows this. No matter what you wished to eat before, you will throw it down at this point. In particular, if it’s something that I’m giving you at this point, you will absolutely refuse to eat it! Why? That is the time the karma has matured. This is absolutely a truth that’s in plain sight. Then when you are in the midst of your anger, even when the nicest person comes to try to talk to you, the only response you have is, “Go, go, go, go, go away! Don’t bother being long winded here!” Isn’t it like this? Why does

this happen? The fruition of terrible karma! Yet this karma is not quite like the karma of hell. When you compare the sufferings of hell to what we experience now, we don't know how many thousands of times greater [are the sufferings of hell]. Therefore, this karma is stronger by so many folds! Our karma now is so little [in comparison], and we are already feeling like this! Now do you believe me?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 21.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P29 LL3]

Therefore, what is written in the sutras, absolutely do not deceive us. We are foolish now, that's why we would use our own way of thinking, and always feel, "Ah, what's written in the sutras is to scare you [in order] to exhort you!" There is no such thing! If it is used to scare you and then exhort you, then Buddha is not the one who speaks the truth. Yet, Buddha has clearly told us these things in many places. This is something we absolutely need to understand. Thus, these are the areas where we should really pay attention to.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P172; 41B, 22.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P30 L2]

How about the life span of hungry ghost? No need to mention the life span! Anyhow, as soon as you fall in there, [the life span] is an astronomical figure. No matter which one of the miserable realms you fall into, as soon as you arrive, as soon you go there...eh! Therefore, the realm of human is the only place where one can practice and you only have a few decades there. That's all there is! Therefore, as you think about this, the more you understand, the more you will

strive diligently, the more you will strive diligently! This is something we should understand here.

Now please open up to page 96, the 2nd line. The first half was explained previously, [we're now at] the 2nd sentence of the 2nd line. (English text is Page 173, Line 10.)

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 23.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P30 LL8]

Thus, when you contemplate these sufferings of the miserable realms, think like this: "At present it is difficult to endure sitting for merely a single day with my hand stuck in burning coals, or to remain naked for that long in a cave of ice during the winter winds,

Let's take it one at a time. Contemplate the sufferings mentioned earlier, this is the first one. Then, after contemplating on the sufferings, you might want to think like this: what if I stick my hand in the burning coals. No need to mention the embers in hell. You can heat a pot of rumbling boiling oil and put your hand in it for one day and night, see what it feels like. No need for one day and night, I know for myself that I absolutely won't be able to tolerate it, absolutely not! If you ask me to put my hand in a pot of burning oil for just a second and then immediately take it out, I definitely wouldn't want to do that! Would any one of you be willing to do that? Would anyone be willing to do that? I think no one would be willing to do that. Therefore, don't just say ah,

there is no such thing and you are unable to summon the motivation [to practice]! If you cannot bring up the motivation [to practice], the best remedy is for you to do something like this for a short while and I guarantee you will be motivated, I guarantee you will be able motivated.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 24.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P31 L2]

Therefore, let me tell you a story of mine because I am a very foolish and inferior person, therefore though I wanted to practice when I heard the principles then, yet it truly wasn't so easy to engage in practice. So I failed to bring up the desire. Well then what to do then? I used this method. It was in the winter and I was in New York at the time. Oh, winter time in New York is really cold! The temperature is around 5 to 6 degrees in Fahrenheit, and that would be about minus 10 degrees or more in Celsius. No need to mention minus 10 degrees, it's already unbearable at 0 degree. It is extremely cold. So what did I do then? I took a cold water shower, took a cold water shower. I took off my clothes. Since the heater is on inside the house, I kept the heater on for the ground floor, but switched the heater off for the upper floor. Therefore, the upper floor was very cold. Ah, by the time I got upstairs, my face had already turned pale. Then, when I went to the bathroom, took off my clothes and splashed water on myself, "Ah! Ah!" When I came out of the bathroom, I was shivering and jumping! No, no, no, don't want to do this anymore! Don't want to do it anymore! Then I thought about it, "No! No! This is not enough suffering. I need to go in again!" Just like this! After splashing with cold water, the body felt frozen. Then I thought I need to practice, and so when I sat down in meditation again, I didn't doze off

or get distracted. You might want to try this for yourself. This is absolutely the truth. Don't feel aggrieved when you have to take a little suffering! You have to begin like this. However here he tells us that we don't need to go through these sufferings, but instead what should we do? You should just thoroughly contemplate on this.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 25.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P31 LL1]

Another method is to go to an icy place. Needless to mention an icy place, you can just try this. In the summer time, which is already gone, buy two blocks of ice. You take this ice, then either you hold it with your bare hands, or you put it in a bucket with your hands in it. Try this for an hour. Can you take it? You might want to give it a try. To eat ice in the summer is a pleasant thing, but you wouldn't be able to tolerate this! This means, [in contrast to the sufferings we have to endure] in the hells, this [suffering here] would seem better than being in heaven! Ok, so we won't even have to talk about these fierce sufferings.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 26.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P32 L5]

or to go for a few days without food and drink,

Even just to go without eating one meal, not even a few days!
If we make you eat less, can you take it? What else?

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 26.40; Original
Commentary Script Vol 6, P32 L7]**

**or for my body to be stung by a bee and the like. If even
these are difficult to endure, how will I bear the
sufferings of the hot hells, the cold hells, the hungry
ghosts, or the animals devouring each other alive?"**

Can you endure this? Absolutely not. Therefore, begin your
practice from here.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 27.02; Original
Commentary Script Vol 6, P32 LL4]**

**After you have assessed your current condition,
meditate until your mind is filled with fear and dread.**

Every place is like this. He will always describe its
characteristics. Then we will want to practice. This last
sentence describes the “measurement” (the quantity). You
will have to practice up to what point? That is, within your
mind, you will have generated such measurement of this
attitude. This place tells us that you should follow the earlier
section to contemplate and analyze. If it doesn’t work, then
you might want to take your hand, put it in....no need to
mention a pot of hot oil! Even if you just boil some water, try
it out, you can just try it. Then try being icy cold. And when
you take a shower, let the mosquito bite you. Try these
things and see if you can endure them? Use these things to
exhort yourself to cultivate this feeling of suffering and make

your mind change. You will then say, “Ah, I can’t even take this kind of suffering, and so must quickly practice!” Up until what point can you say it’s enough? When you even casually think of it, as soon as the thought arises, this strong and powerful fear will compel you to engage in practice. This kind of mental state has risen. If so, then you can advance onward to the next sections. Otherwise, you need to stop and diligently strive to practice this portion. In every section earlier, he tells us this. This is something we should understand.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 41B, 28.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P33 LL6]

In the section on refuting misconception, there stated a principle. It said, don’t you wish to train in concentration? Yes. What are the obstacles to achieving concentration? Laxity and excitement, these are it. Excitement is thinking all sorts of thoughts and you can’t stop yourself from doing it. Now, if you think like this: after thinking of all sorts of things, after being busy for a long time, at the end you will have to endure such great suffering. As soon as you contemplate these sufferings, will you still be willing to get distracted with all sorts of thoughts?

What sort of thoughts are in your mind, none other than what? Oh! You can’t let this go, can’t let that go. The result of being unable to let go will give you such great suffering. Then by that time, even if I were to give you what you want, you would refuse it. We now understand this principle now.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 00.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P37 L1]

Then, here it tells us how to cultivate. What's the target measurement for this cultivation? That is, under any condition, as soon as you bring this thing up in your mind, this thought, your mind immediately concords with it. This is the time when you can go further [in the teachings]. Since you've attained mastery in this, thus when you begin to learn the training of concentration, [there is efficiency]. In practicing concentration, when your mind gets distracted and becomes preoccupied with all sorts of thoughts, you know, eh, here it goes with various thoughts, can't seem to let this go, can't let that go. [At this time], you'll just need to spend a little effort to bring up the aspect of suffering. Since you've cultivated this previously, as soon as you bring it up, the mindset rises immediately. When this happens, will you still go on being distracted with various thoughts? Hey, you won't be thinking them anymore, right?! Nah, this would be the case. This is the reason why we need to follow the order of the stages one step at a time. Earlier, it explained to us the guideline, the summary, the main outline. Later it will explain to us the detail principles on how to advance step by step. The reason we skipped this section [for now] is because we are not at a point where we can be in accordance with the teachings and practice step by step according to the order of the stages. This is why we didn't talk about it. At the same time, with regards to the content of sufferings, it is pretty easy to understand when you read it by yourself. If you don't understand it, then I will still go through it seriously [with you]. Then, let's continue, let's continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 01.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P38 L2]

Simply knowing about this without conditioning your mind to it, or only meditating on it for a little while, will not accomplish anything.

Keep this sentence in your mind, must certainly keep this sentence in your mind! This says that we would often say, “Ah, I get it! Ah, I understand!” Though you understand, but if you don’t condition your mind to it, can it become useful to you? It won’t be useful. We don’t even need to speak of how useless this is when you don’t meditate on it after you understand it. Even if you do meditate on it, a little meditation that does not reach an adequate measurement [of the attitude/mindset] will still produce no effect. It “**will not accomplish anything.**” It’s like that. For us now, the real obstacle is right here. For many of us, it’s not that we don’t know, but after we know it, do we practice it? No! Then it becomes useless. You have to do it. Then when we do meditate on it, we can’t be careless and nonchalant. We have to sincerely meditate. Sincere meditation will certainly include these two aspects: the content (or quality) must be correct and the measurement (or quantity) must be adequate. The measurement must be adequate and you will still need to have a grasp of the correct method. In order to grasp the correct method, the first thing to do is to rely on the Teacher.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 03.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P38 LL5]

There is a fellow practitioner who has been practicing a Dharma instrument the last two days. True, this is very good of him. He is motivated to play the Dharma instrument and

willing to practice it. But after he tried practicing, he thought it was difficult. To me, yes, it's true that he has spent a lot of effort. But let me point something out. What is the most important issue here? It is whether you've got the knack for this, whether you've received the guidance from an excellent Teacher. With my experience from before, I have practiced it for him last night. So I told him I've played the bells and drums, but that it has been 20 years, this is absolutely true, it has been 20 years since I've touched them. After I left Lan-Ruo (a place where Shifu resided before), I haven't played them again. Well perhaps not quite 20 years yet, but it has been 17 years, I haven't played them since. Last night, I just started playing, and I thought it wasn't bad! I think there are people who heard it right? If you compare it with others in general, I think it wasn't that bad? Yes. If you don't believe it, I can go to the main shrine right now and play it for you. I didn't really learn it before. I didn't have anyone who formally taught me.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 04.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P39 L5]

Therefore, you want to pay attention to what's important: as long as you are willing to learn, this is the first one. Then what? When you learn, are you learning it properly? This is number two. If you learnt it yourself and follow your own ways, even after you learn it, you've caused harm to yourself! Why? If you've learned it with your own methods and developed a bad habit, when we ask you to correct it, it would be really difficult to do so. So this is the first thing that we must learn. Not only do we need to learn, we must obtain the skillful method to do so. This is absolutely the truth. If you get a grasp of these two things...how did I learn this

before? I looked for the person who played it well. People would say, I could listen to the sounds myself too. This one particular person was very good at it. So I would stay next to him, carefully studying and figuring it out. How does he play? I would listen and see how it sounds? Then I go look at how he does it. You then try it a little bit on your own. [After that,] when you do it, you won't be too far off. You rehearse it a little, and within half a day, I guarantee you will learn it really well. Like that.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 05.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P39 LL3]

Conversely, why did I bring this up? With something that's very obvious displayed in front of you, you can't even figure out [how to play it properly]. So then when you learn Buddhism, by just reading some books, you feel, "Ai! I can do this." You think that's possible? Therefore in every place, it will tell us this, what is the key to learning Buddhism? You will need to have a grasp of this – you must practice, and you must practice according to the teachings, to the principles and achieve the proper measurement! In order to practice according to the teachings, to the principles and achieve the proper measurement, you must find an excellent Teacher. In order to find an excellent Teacher, what qualities do you need? Remember this! It's not that there aren't excellent Teachers around, but whether we have an adequate measurement of concordance to be with an excellent

Teacher. This is what's most important. If you can do this, the rest of the problems will be resolved.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 06.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P40 L4]

This has been stated numerous times before, you can see this everywhere in the scriptures, and we know this by now. Therefore, when we truly practice, the first thing to do is to purify ourselves! Let me read through this again, **“Simply knowing about this without conditioning your mind to it, or only meditating on it for a little while, will not accomplish anything.”** It's not easy to hear this principle. Without virtuous roots from previous lives, without special virtuous karma, sorry, you will absolutely not be able to hear the scriptures, or Buddhism. Today you've heard it, and if you do not diligently practice, it would be such a waste, it would be too bad! This is what we should understand here.

There is a story next.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 06.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P40 L9]

The *Bases of Discipline* says:³⁰⁴ [129]

The two sons of Ananda's sister became monks and were made to learn to read. After reading for a few days, they became lazy and stopped. They were then entrusted to Maudgalyayana, but acted as before, so Ananda told Maudgalyayana, "You must make them renounce!"

Thus Maudgalyayana took them on a walk, and miraculously revealed a hell of living beings. When they heard the sounds of cutting, hacking, and other such actions, the two nephews went to investigate and witnessed the sufferings of being cut, etc. Since there were two great boiling kettles there, they asked whether someone would not be placed in them as well. The hell-guardians replied, "Ananda's two nephews have become monks and are wasting their time through their laziness; after they die, they will be reborn here." The two were terrified, and each thought, "If I am smart, I will make an effort right now!"

They returned to where Maudgalyayana was and reported what had happened. Then Maudgalyayana said: "O novices, laziness gives rise to problems such as this and to others as well. You should have joyous perseverance!" Hence, the two began to persevere enthusiastically.

Okay, the text is pretty easy to understand. After I read it through once, I think you all understand it now. The reason I am going to tell the story one more time is to use a light story to exhort us. The sutra states that Ananda had two nephews who had become monks. They were taught to read and learn well, but, ah, **"they became lazy and stopped."** Ah, it was a hardship to read and learn! Ananada didn't know what to do and so he asked Maudgalyayana to help. Even though Maudgalyayana went to teach them, they still acted the same way. So there was nothing else that can be done! Ananda then said, "Eh, can you think of a method and make the two renounce!" So what did Maudgalyayana do? He led them to a place, and miraculously revealed a great hell. Eh, they went there to look and what was the sound that they

heard? So they took a look! They were so terrified of the sufferings of the hell. Next to them were two huge frying woks. All the other frying woks produced sizzling sounds as they fried living beings inside them. There are two frying woks which did not have any living beings inside. They asked, “Why is there no one in here?” What did the hell-guardians reply? The hell-guardians replied that Ananda's two nephews had become monks and were **“wasting their time through their laziness;”** after they die, they will be reborn here.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 09.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P41 LL4]

Let's stop here for a little bit. We have also been ordained, right? Have we persevered joyously? We need to think about this! May I ask, for each day we spend here, aren't you just opening your mouth and eating the food from those who give out alms giving because of faith? For everything that you use and eat, and your shelter, may I ask which one of them did you earn yourself? Which one of them did you earn with hardship? Any one of them? No. Then, after you eat the food, what have you done? Did you persevere joyously? You may say, “Ah, we have the morning and the evening classes here.” What do you do in the morning and evening classes? Either you are distracted or lethargic. Does this count as practicing diligently? Oh, look at this! This happened during the time when Buddha appeared in this world! I think the situation in the time of the Buddha should be much better than now! Um, though they lived in Buddha's time, they would have still fallen [into the miserable realms]. That is absolutely true! This really deserves our thoughts.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 10.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P42 L4]

So now what does the story say? It says that these two hell-guardians said the two novice monks did not practice diligently...note they were only novice monks! If they were fully ordained monks, it would be even worse because the criteria are set even higher. Ah, so these two were terrified, "Ah! It's terrible. If we now know that we'll have to enter there, it's terrible. Let us go back! Let us go back!" So then Maudgalyayana asked them, what did you see? They said they saw that. Ah, you have to tell them, and so Maudgalyayana told them,

"This is a small case. There are far more serious ones!"
Why would this happen to someone?

Laziness. What is laziness? Not joyously persevering is being lazy. It (joyous perseverance) doesn't just mean making efforts. Even when you are busy with irrelevant thing, they are also [counted as being lazy]. The people of the mundane world are busy all the time, that's not called joyously persevering. What is joyously persevering? That is when you concord with virtue and exhort yourself to strive at it. That's called joyously persevering. This is something we absolutely... [Joyously preserving,] it is not just going about to do something today with very distracted thoughts in your mind and having no concordance [with the teachings]. No need to mention that we do not concord with both of these! Therefore this part tells us that, "**the two began to persevere enthusiastically.**" The two began to persevere. The next portion is very interesting.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P173; 42A, 12.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P42 LL1]

If they recalled hell prior to eating, they were unable to eat. If they recalled it after eating, they vomited.

This was the actual situation then. If they didn't eat yet, as soon as they thought of what they saw in hell, they couldn't eat. Ah, they would be terrified! Similarly, after they ate, as soon as they thought of it, they would be so terrified and vomit. This is what really happened. This tells us that, it is just that we haven't seen it for ourselves. If we do see it, we would be terrified as well. Therefore, the sutra tells us this as well: If you all are like me and can see for yourself the fright of the miserable realms after you fall from committing non-virtues, then without any exception, you will fall down just like reeds, completely paralyzed. Look at how serious this is. You will absolutely not be able to tolerate it! Therefore, all these places are exhorting us to do one thing, to joyously persevere! Do not be greedy for some little gains now. Don't be saying, "Ah, can't get the urge to do this, can't the urge to do that. Now is the only time you can make effort!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 13.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P43 LL6]

Then Maudgalyayana took them on a different walk, where they heard from another direction the music of the deities' magic lutes and the like. When they went to investigate, they saw heavenly palaces filled with goddesses, but no gods. When they asked why there were no gods, they were told, "Ananda's nephews have become monks and are persevering joyously; when they die, they will be reborn here." The two were delighted,

and told Maudgalyayana, who said: "O novices, since this benefit, and others as well, arise from joyous perseverance, persevere joyously!"

Well then further on, they were led to the deity realm. Eh, after looking at the heaven, there was this particular heavenly palace that was filled with goddesses. This heavenly palace was very beautiful, but there was no gods there. So they asked, "Why is there no god and other palaces have gods?" So one said, "Ananda has two nephews. After they are ordained, they have been persevering diligently. After their diligent efforts, they will be reborn here after they die." Ah! After they heard this, they were so happy. They told Maudgalyayana this. Then Maudgalyayana told them, "All kinds of benefits are from joyously preserving in cultivation." The best explication this story gives us is that the few decades of human lives will go by quickly. If you really strive, you will obtain these great benefits but if you become lazy, there are these great faults. The difference between the benefits and the faults is quite extreme.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 14.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P44 L5]

They did so, and when they were receiving an explanation of the scriptures, they were taught from the authoritative scriptures that

Page 96 (English text, page 174), Ananda's two nephews, at first, though they were ordained, they didn't want to practice. Then they witnessed the sufferings of hell and later, they saw heaven. For every place that they had gone, there was a transformative change. Without having gone to these places,

they wouldn't have changed. This is what we notice here. To go from being unmotivated to learn to willingly engage in learning, this was an extremely great transformation. This was an extremely great transformation. For something like this, it's something that every one of us would envy and every one of us would hope to change like that. However, why can't we do it? This is the first [question] that we can all think about. The second one, this is a very interesting question. Though they had such a great change, but if you look at the fundamental intention behind it, the purpose was the same as before. They had at first become lazy and not want to make any efforts. What was the reason for that? They wanted to be happy, they were solely after happiness, it's that simple. When they changed later, why did they change? They still wanted to be happy, right? Here, this is a concept you should pay attention to, you need to understand!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 17.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P44 LL1]

Therefore, although Buddhism tells us “conceiving the impermanent to be permanent, suffering to be happiness, the selfless to have a self, and the impure to be pure,” it says that these are the four errors, and it's absolutely true. When you say these are happiness, the reality of it is the complete opposite. What is the real purpose behind telling you that your happiness is quite flawed? Why? It is to tell us this kind of happiness is false, not ultimate, deceptive, and harmful, it's not real happiness, and you've got it wrong. The real purpose for this is still to pursue true happiness. We should have a good grasp of this [concept]. Therefore, if you look at this from a shallower perspective of the present, it would seem that Buddhism and the mundane world seem to

Speak of two very different things, of completely the opposite. However, if you look in depth and get to the bottom of it, then what Buddhism tells us is the exact thing that we should be looking for in the mundane world. What are the people in the mundane world really looking for? Happiness! Sorry, since you don't know the reality of happiness and you don't know the method for pursuing happiness, even though you have spent lots of time looking for it, you've not found happiness but instead you had to endure great suffering! For this reason, though it's only a small happiness in front of you, eh, you would become befuddled. It is obviously deceiving but you take it as happiness and as a result, you have to endure great suffering because of it. This is the error.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 18.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P45 LL7]

Therefore, the error itself is not happiness and the error stems from your ignorance. Because of your ignorance, you can't see the truth and thus conceive suffering to be happiness. This is what's really important to us. Therefore, at the beginning, he points out the truth of the mundane world—four errors. At the end, when you completely understand, eh, what does the Great Final Nirvana Sutra say? Permanent, happiness, self, and pure. Eh, it is marvelous! Regarding this principle, we just randomly talked about it. However, don't try to find permanent, happiness, self, and pure with our ignorant concepts because no matter how you look for it, you would be wrong. No matter how you look for it, you would be wrong.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 19.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P45 LL2]

Therefore, what we should really understand is this here. The reason I point this out is that the reason we don't want to learn now is what? We are greedy for happiness. Buddhism tells us truthfully that if you really wish to do something good for yourself, you need to do this. Here is where we should focus upon. Like that. Therefore, for those of us who have set a commitment, it's very good. For the many who are still lazy, this is the place where you need to increase your understanding. Once you have this understanding, the real benefit is ultimately yours. At that time, with the problem of not cultivating, you will completely correct it and elevate yourself. Therefore, number two. Ananda's two nephews saw how beautiful the heaven is, and this is the result of cultivation, ah, they happily began to practice! Well then after that? He tells us to continue to read, the first line of page 97 (English text, page 174). It says.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 20.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P46 L7]

[They did so, and when they were receiving an explanation of the scriptures, they were taught from the authoritative scriptures that] you can be reborn from the happy realms into the miserable realms, as cited previously. [130]

So then the two persevered. They used to be lazy, careless and nonchalant. When you asked them to do things, they weren't willing. Now they are willing, they will recite and read the sutras. Then when they read the sutras, eh, they read from this particular authoritative sutra, and what does it say?

It says that after you are reborn in the heavens, you will have to fall again. Now they feel scared since they have personally seen the sufferings of the miserable realms and thought if they go to heaven through cultivation, it's pretty good in heaven. Then in the end, they discover that one will still have to fall after being reborn in heaven. As soon as you understand this suffering, ah, no one would be willing, no one would be willing. Though we might go to heaven now, yet ultimately we'll still have to go to [miserable realms]. This is a place we absolutely don't want to go! Therefore they ask this.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 21.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P46 LL1]

When they heard this, they asked Maudgalyayana, "O noble being, must we also die as a deity or human, and then be reborn into the three miserable realms?"

Eh, so they asked, "After we are reborn as humans or deities, would we still fall into the miserable realms?" The answer was affirmative.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 21.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P47 L3]

He replied, "O youths, until you stop your afflictions, you must move like a water wheel throughout cyclic existence in its five realms."

Then Maudgalyayana told them, "You two will need to understand that though you are reborn in the happy realms temporarily, but the happy realms are still within the cyclic existence." What is the cause to cyclic existence? Karma. Karma is governed by delusions which are afflictions. As long as you have afflictions and they are not stopped, sorry! That's when you will forever cycle in here. Where you cycle around is the five realms, the five realms. Some places will say the six realms, when you put asuras in the realm of the deities [then it becomes five realms]. This we know. Therefore there are the three happy realms, deities, asuras, and humans. If you combine the asuras into the deities, then there are two realms, deities and humans. We know the three miserable realms. Within these, we cycle like what? A wheel. The wheel is much like what we see on the top of a well, it continues to turn forever without a beginning or an end. Much like a chain, or a belt in a car, that continues to cycle forever without a beginning or an end. Sorry! As long as you have not stopped your afflictions, you will forever have to cycle in here. Ah, once they realized no matter how great the happiness there is in the deity realm one will still have to be fried in an oil pot, they couldn't take it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 23.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P47 LL1]

The two, after they had renounced cyclic existence,

In that case then, they would not want to be reborn in heaven or go there! With this short passage, if we can think

of some ways to apply it both physically and mentally, then we will immediately attain achievements in cultivation. Therefore, in the previous sections, it repeats again and again that even though we can say words which accord with the teachings, if we are unable to concord with what has been said afterwards, then the words become merely theories, merely theories. If you reach concordance with it, then you would be right. Not only is this true from the perspective of benefiting the self, but it is also true in the perspective of benefiting others. If you are unable to concord with it yourself, you will not be able to achieve it and will not know how to do it, then would it be useful when you explain it to others? Of course, if others already have virtuous roots, they will be able to apply after hearing it. On the other hand, if they do not have virtuous roots, it will still be useful in planting some sort of virtuous roots in them. However, as far as for the actual procurement of the ultimate fruit, it will be very doubtful.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 24.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P48 L8]

Therefore, this is a point which we should pay attention to. We are not overlooking the fact that we must begin from understanding the words and language. In fact, we know that this is necessary. Similarly, we need to also be aware of the next step once we are able to understand the words and language. This would require a substantial effort, and it is called practice, practice. Therefore, while it may be easy to listen and understand, we also need to be able to apply it physically and mentally, to reflect and analyze in order to develop a counteractive ability which accords with the teachings and in adequate measurements that can

eventually remedy the afflictions. These are what should be done after we understand. Until you have developed thoughts of revulsion, and before you develop it, you want to continue to work on this part. Well then upon hearing these principles these two developed thoughts of revulsion.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 25.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P49 L1]

said, "Henceforth, we will not indulge in the afflictions; thus, please explain the teachings to us!"

Ah! By this it means that no matter how happy things can be, one would still fall [into miserable realms]. So, one absolutely cannot indulge in afflictions anymore. Therefore, they asked the Teacher to please explain the true teachings to both of them. The true teachings are able to properly pinpoint afflictions, apply remedies to afflictions, and purify afflictions.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 26.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P49 L3]

Consequently, Maudgalyayana gave them the teachings, and they became Arhats.

Good! The problem is solved, problem is solved. Next, let us read on.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 26.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P49 L5]

Thus, meditation on suffering puts an end to laziness and generates joyous perseverance at accomplishing the path. It spurs you toward liberation and is the root of the cause for attaining it.

Remember this, remember this! Therefore what is the greatest obstacle to practice? It is laziness. This can eliminate laziness and generate joyful perseverance. After you give rise to joyous perseverance you can then be “accomplishing the path.” Then, if you follow this and strive to seek for liberation, you will attain it. The root cause for all of this...this root cause, why do we talk about the root cause? There are many causes. For instance, there is the leisure and opportunity section earlier, how to obtain an excellent Teacher, and also mindfulness of death, they are all causes which spur us. Within these causes, what is the primary root to them? Suffering! Suffering!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 27.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P49 LL2]

Here we can go back and take a look. When we become mindful of death and mindful of leisure and opportunity, they are extremely effective in exhorting us to practice. What is the reason that they exhort us? This still boils down to these two words, happiness and suffering. Think about it, isn't it right? Beginning from leisure and opportunity, we understand that all beings wish to achieve happiness and alleviate suffering. In order to alleviate sufferings and achieve happiness, it can only be achieved through cultivation. Like that. Well then cultivation must depend on having a human body of leisure and opportunity. Thus, the meaning of having a human body of leisure and opportunity

becomes very significant (of great importance). Through this you can then understand what is the root reason that leisure and opportunity can exhort us to practice? It is still suffering!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42A, 28.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P50 L5]

After that we talked about mindfulness of death. Oh, this death portion talks about how life is very fleeting. After you've been busy for all your life, no matter how wonderful things are for you, it is like a dream at the end. Afterwards, all will die. Therefore, there isn't much worth [to what you are pursuing]. The problem is that after you die, you'll have to continue onwards, and where do you continue to go towards? You are led by your karma. Since one is led by karma, then we began to consider how, oh, one will fall into miserable realms. Thus as you think of this, [you realize] this won't do! This won't do! If you understand this and practice, then through practicing you will transcend and perhaps even become liberated from cyclic existence, rendering you unafraid of death. Therefore, when we cultivate mindfulness of death, the primary root cause for doing so is still suffering! It is very clear and very obvious. This is what we need to understand here.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 00.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P51 L1]

Therefore, why do the four noble truths encompass all of Buddha's Teachings? Here is the reason for it. This is what we need to have a grasp of. Thus for this concept, I wanted

to specifically point this out. So when we do anything, we need to have a grasp of where the root is and thus the root cause. After that, [find] the complete causes. If you can grasp these two points, and have readied all the causes, then the resulting fruit will certainly be perfect.

Thus, he explains this principle below.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 00.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P51 L5]

Since it was praised for this even when the Teacher was alive, he had nothing superior to teach as a personal instruction for liberation.

With respect to this principle, even if Buddha appears again [in this world], even if Buddha appears again, he will teach the same principle, nothing is superior to it. Therefore, suffering itself is the primary cause for learning Buddhism, which is also the root cause. What varies is the quality and measurement of suffering which range from shallow to deep. It only varies in that. Then after that, you take this and begin to consider others in your own place, thus marking yet another difference.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 01.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P52 L1]

This passage shows clearly the progression of the contemplations for persons of small and medium capacities.

Similarly, it is right here, on suffering which is the root cause, depending

on the breadth and depth of one's ability to analyze this [suffering], hence the topics of the small, medium, and great capacities are [determined and] explained. This is so for the [determination of the] content. The order of the stages of cultivation is determined as such as well. If one can only focus on the immediate, then one is a person of small capacity. If you can go deeper in perspective, you will be a person of medium capacity. Then for those who have the most ultimate and perfect understanding, they are persons of the great capacity, persons of the great capacity. Why does he bring this up here? On one hand, of course it explains that regardless of what segment you are in, the root cause is right here. At the same time, here it reminds us that if this is the case and we can grasp the root key point at the very beginning, then our very first step will be on the most direct and fastest path. It is also the most energy-saving and the most convenient path! The most energy-saving and the most convenient path! Therefore, many of us now always feel that, ah, I can't do it! I am very inferior! By having this kind of concept in our minds, we actually harm ourselves. We harm ourselves. Yes, now you can't move forward because you are afraid of minor sufferings, but as a result, you will have to endure great suffering. This is how people are really foolish.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 03.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P52 LL4]

Regarding this point, it will be particularly explained in the chapter on joyful perseverance. The reason we cannot move forward now is because we feel that we lack the strength. This is quite true but what's the other side to this? It is that we feel we are

afraid of the suffering [brought on by cultivation], we feel that, oh, there is so much hardship, we won't be able to forbear it. As a result, since you are afraid of some minor sufferings now, you end up forbearing immeasurable sufferings. This is so not worthwhile, so not worthwhile. Now there is a special benefit to this treatise, regarding the principles. Before you formally begin to practice, it tells you the complete [path]. Like that. Once you have this understanding, you don't want to rashly begin to meditate, but instead follow the order of the stages and increase your abilities and strength. You may go a little slower, but you will be able to see it very clearly. In the end, you will [discover that you] have taken the fastest, the fastest, and the most direct path.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 04.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P53 L4]

This particularly explains that, ah! In this section where we are supposed to meditate on suffering, it tells us that even though the suffering described here belongs to the topics of small capacity, meaning that it is told to help us avoid the fall into miserable realms, but actually this topic continues onward into medium and great capacities. All of Buddhism teaches none other than this. Therefore, even though we will explain medium and great capacities later, what is said now is a foundation to them. Therefore, this is a common foundation. The reason we didn't go into it in detail is because we are not ready to follow it to train right now, but we are only at the point of understanding the principles. Therefore, I have explained the principles of it in detail. As for the formal (actual) content of it, when we are ready to actually meditate on them, that's when we will turn back and seriously study

and discuss anew. Then based on our understanding, we will reflect and analyze in order to spur the realization of suffering. At that time, your mind will feel, “Ah!” As soon as you think of suffering, you will give rise to thoughts which concord with suffering. Well then once you give rise to this attitude, how much is enough? To only give rise to the attitude is not enough! If you just give rise to it, it is correct in the quality aspect but you must achieve an adequate measurement. Well then, what is the measure of the attitude you wish to get to? Okay! He will also explain this next.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 05.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P53 LL1]

As for the measure of the attitudes of these two types of persons, you must constantly strive to meditate on these points until you develop an attitude like that of Ananda's nephews.

Since we didn't understand the reality of the world before, thus we are attached to it. What is the result of being attached? Oh, it turns out that, ah! You will create all kinds of suffering. This subjective aspect of attachment is contaminated, and now that we understand it, we can purify it. At that time, you will get to recognize the true reality and not be fooled. This is called “constantly strive to meditate.” To what degree will you need to carry this to? Until you develop an attitude like this – this attitude, it is something which our minds take active interest in. What is it that you are interested in? [An interest of] disenchantment as soon as you see things. It doesn't matter how great things are, as soon as you see it, you feel disenchanted. Before you develop this great

disenchantment, you need to constantly use this to exhort yourself to practice, therefore you “must,” [note] this word, meaning you have to do this. You also need to “constantly” do so, without any interruption in time. You should “strive” which means you need to work hard at practicing it. Therefore, every word here describes an actual state of being! When you train, what must you do? You must do so earnestly with great strength, and thus it is called “strive.” Then when you meditate, you must do it often, what is considered often? Without any interruption and therefore it’s constant. This is something we must do, it is what we should do now. In the earlier sections, whether it is on a human life of leisure and opportunity, on the difficulty of obtaining leisure and opportunity, the fleetingness of death and impermanence, all revolve around the main theme of suffering. This is also the first step to learning and practicing Buddhism. You want to practice this until what level? Until you develop great disenchantment.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 08.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P54 LL3]

Therefore we can stop here for a moment and think about this. If we understand this principle, then it’s very convenient [to use]. If we do not understand this principle, we can contemplate on some of the previous examples and we will then immediately achieve a sound understanding. What example? We said before that let’s say you have a close friend, and you two are usually very close, like two peas in a pod, hard to separate the two of you. Then all of a sudden a person comes to tell you, “So and so! You are so close to this person normally, but he is actually a big liar. He is out particularly to criticize you behind your back all the

time, and hurt you behind your back. He has also led you this way..... If this is true, and once you discover the truth, may I ask you, would you still befriend this person? I think no one would be an exception, once you know for certain the truth, you will realize this good friend of yours is a big liar who has done nothing except hurting you. You will develop a great dislike. Though you can't do anything about it for the moment, but as soon as you see him, your mind generates a great dislike and think, "this is who he really is!" You will develop a great dislike, right?

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 08.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P54 LL3]

What does this explain? It explains our mind. It is absolutely true that it is not difficult at all for us to train in this. The difficulty is on not being able to understand the realities of things. Therefore the most difficult part for us is what? It is ignorance and therefore we cannot truthfully see the reality of these things that we find difficult to part with. If you truly see how these things are only hurting us, then no one would possibly want them.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 10.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P55 LL5]

Therefore often when others see you who are learning Buddhism and had become ordained, they would say, "Ha! When you become ordained, you have to be vegetarian, and you can't get married?" Ah! So he feels, how can this be... I don't know what to say to this kind of person but if we truly understand the situation, then you'll realize that when you

eat a pound of a being, you don't just give back 8 oz. If all you have to do is to give back 8 oz, that's pretty good, if you just ate ½ a pound and all you need to do is to give back 8 oz. The problem is if you ate ½ a pound, it will become an enormous amount to repay! Actually, this principle is very simple! Now we just casually scoop up anything to eat. Once it's inside your mouth, it is merely that. Then why don't you try sparing 8 oz of your own flesh in return. Ha! Ya, you have no idea how long you'll have to endure the pain for doing so. Absolutely! Isn't it true? This is a very simple [and straight forward] thing! Now that you know how plain and simple this is, and this hasn't even required that you enter hell for it. If you had to enter hell for it, then go ahead and figure it out for yourself, it becomes not very simple! This is where we are to be pitied.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 11.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P56 L4]

Thus if everyone can truly understand this, then at that time, you will discover that it's not difficult to develop disenchantment. You should know that in everything, the most difficult thing is to obtain the correct view. Thus now the practitioners of Buddhism are often all like this, "Ah, need to cultivate." How do you cultivate? Don't know. Haven't even achieved a basic understanding of it, how will you cultivate? This is how the teaching has truly declined and the real reason that we cannot cultivate, cannot achieve. Well then now that we understand the principles, a past master further spurs us with this particular point. What does he say that we should do? With respect to this principle, how should you apply it? Here is a master, a classic role model for us.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 12.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P56 LL5]

Neu-sur-ba (sNe'u-zur-pa) said:

Examine

First, he tells us what we should really put to practice now, something we should do now! With the things that we do now, this is very interesting because we only do what we like to do instead of doing what we should do. Can you tell the difference between what we like to do and what we should do? What we should do is usually something we don't like to do and are not willing to do. Buddha has already told us what we should do, but we don't necessarily do them, we just do what we like to do. However, what we like to do always fall under the influence of ignorance and will always send us to hell. Therefore, whenever the text says "should", you want to alarm yourself, "should," what should we do here? We should recognize our ignorance and follow Buddha's correct view. That is how we should learn from the Buddha. If you can't get a grasp of this point, though we are ordained, and it's the same for lay practitioners, though we feel that we are learning Buddhism, but we are actually still learning about the "self," not Buddhism.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 13.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P56 L4]

Then, what should we who are learning Buddhism do? In our mind, we shouldn't be looking for this person's faults or that person's faults. We should examine the causes that I am creating. **"The causes for being born here,"** here

means where? The three miserable realms. Ah, it's an unspeakable suffering. Why does one go there? This is because he has created the causes. Therefore, let us examine if we have created the causes to be born in hell.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 13.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P57 LL5]

whether or not you have previously created the conditions for being born in these miserable realms, whether or not you are currently creating them, whether or not you would consider creating them in the future.

Have I previously created them? Am I currently creating them? Also consider what I will do in the future too.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 14.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P57 LL3]

Since you will go there if you have created them, are creating them, or would consider creating them,

If you had created them before, are currently creating them, or would consider creating them in the future, after you do these things, you will have to go there. Where? The three miserable realms. The three miserable realms are such a horrifying place, with great suffering and torment. Yet if you created [the conditions] then you will not be able to escape it.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 14.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P58 L2]

think, "If I am born there, what will I do then; will I be able to do anything?"

Once I'm there, what can I do? Will I be able to forbear it? This is something we need to reflect on thoroughly, and analyze thoroughly!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 14.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P58 L5]

With your head pounding, or like a man struggling in the desert, consider that there will be absolutely nothing you can do, and develop as much fear and dread as possible. This, clearly, is the key point.

And then? With what was said earlier, after you gain an understanding of it, you take this understanding and continuously think about it, contemplate and analyze. You'll have to analyze this until what extent? As soon as you reflect and analyze, as soon as you think about it, ah! **"Your head pounds,"** it makes you so fearful, ah, your body's reaction will be as if you've seen something extremely horrifying, your hair will stand straight up. You will not know what to do with yourself. You can't sit or stand. This is the state you'll be in. What's that like? You will have developed a great fear and realized how horrifying it would be if you end up there. You need to develop this attitude. Once you develop this attitude, what's the benefit to that? Once you develop this attitude, you will be entirely disenchanted with things you can't let go of now and you will desperately strive to learn the teachings. You will have easily remedied laxity, easily remedied laxity. So this place tells us a correct method. It is the best advice from the past Master.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P174; 42B, 16.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P59 L1]

You currently have a good life for developing the path. Consequently, if you contemplate in this way, you will clear away previously accrued non-virtuous karma and deter your future accumulations.

The reason we can listen to the teaching and contemplate accordingly is because we have obtained this life of leisure and opportunity and now is exactly the time that we possess this virtuous life of leisure and opportunity. While you have this life of leisure and opportunity, you can contemplate in accordance with the teaching. If so, you can clear away previously accrued non-virtuous karma, decrease or even deter your future accumulations. Then you will no longer be reborn in [the miserable realms]!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P175; 42B, 17.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P59 L6]

Your prayers of fervent aspiration will redirect previously accrued virtues, causing them to increase. You will be able to enter many new avenues for engaging in virtuous actions. Therefore, you will make your leisure and opportunity meaningful every day. [131]

As for the non-virtuous karma? You clear it away and deter [future] accumulations. As for the virtuous karma? The previously accrued virtues will be increased because of your

fervent aspiration and dedication. As for now and in the future, you will strive to increase virtues. In this way, we will be utilizing this difficult to obtain body of leisure and opportunity every moment, every day. That's when this body of leisure and opportunity produces the greatest efficiency. Yet with what we normally do now, it's quite pitiful. There is one kind of person who has had the rare opportunity of listening to the teachings, they've come to this place but remain afflicted. Ah, they are restless whether they are standing or sitting, thinking about this and thinking about that. Before coming, they wished they could be here. Now that they are here, they are restless. Such a pity! Moreover, even though some may not have this sort of thoughts, but they would just sit there, eat and always feel happy. They are all wasting this life of leisure and opportunity! Therefore, what should we really do with this life of leisure and opportunity? After we understand the principle, we should clear away previously accrued non-virtuous causes, stop doing them in the future, quickly increase virtue, and strive to increase them even more in the future. This is the right thing to do!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P175; 42B, 19.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P60 L2]

If you do not contemplate these things now, when you fall into a miserable realm, you will not find a refuge to protect you from these terrors even though you seek one. At that time, you will not have the intelligence to understand that which you should adopt and that which you should cast aside.

If we do not thoroughly reflect and analyze this principle now, then due to your lack of contemplation, of course you will not practice. If you do not practice, you will have created many non-virtuous causes. After you create non-virtuous causes, you will certainly go [to miserable realms]. Like that. Therefore, you will not have any method of escaping this place. So if you do not contemplate the principles, well then even though you do not wish to fall, it would be impossible [not to], it would be impossible [not to]! Once you fall, you can do absolutely nothing then because at that time, you will not be capable of discerning what you should adopt and what you should cast aside. Do animals have this ability to discern? Do hungry ghosts and hell beings have the ability to discern? Even if you are capable, when you are in great pain, can you make discernments? I think this is something that every one of us can understand. This is where we need to really exhort ourselves, think about it. Let's continue.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P175; 42B, 20.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P60 LL4]

***As Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:*³⁰⁵**

If I neglect to cultivate virtue

Even when I have the good fortune to do so, What shall I do when I am confused

By the sufferings of the miserable realms?

This says that while we can cultivate virtue now but we neglect to, by the time we fall into the miserable realms and be subjected to great miseries, we would be constantly shrouded by suffering and confusion, what can we do then? Of course, it would be impossible [to do anything]! Therefore,

while with much difficulty that we have obtained this human life of leisure and opportunity, do not waste it! Do not waste it! If we are greedy for some small benefits up front now, you do not need to do this now, just wait until you become an animal, that's the perfect time for you to do this. Since animals have this kind of ability, they have the capacity, why waste your human life on this? This is what we must understand. When we obtain a human form, the most important thing to do is to practice, there is nothing else. There isn't anything else to do. There isn't anything else to do.

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P175; 42B, 21.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P61 L4]

And also:

Saying, "Who will protect me

From this great terror?"

I will stare, aghast,

And search all around for a refuge. Seeing no refuge anywhere, I will be completely dejected. If there is no refuge there, What will I do?

This says that once you really fall [into the miserable realms], at that time of course, you will be looking [for refuge]. Ah, amidst this great terror and great suffering, you will be searching for someone, "who can help me?" You will be searching everywhere but you won't be able to find one anywhere, you won't find one anywhere [to help you]. Therefore at that time, ah, no one can protect you, no one to

depend on. What can you do then? **“What will I do?”** By that time, it’s too late. By that time, it’s too late!

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P175; 42B, 22.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P61 LL4]

Thus, from today, I go for refuge

To the Conqueror, protector of living beings, The one who strives to rescue living beings, The mighty one who dispels all fear.

Therefore, while it’s not too late, you must diligently strive. Strive to do what? Go for refuge to all the Buddhas. Buddhas are whom all sentient beings can depend on. This is so for the self, and then you will need to consider how others also are in the same situation as you. You will still need to help all sentient beings be freed from this. This is the time then! This is the time we can rescue ourselves and all sentient beings from this bitter ocean of unparallel suffering and immense terror.

T. V6 Page 62

[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P175; 42B, 23.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 6, P62 L1]

The preceding discussion is a mere overview. You should by all means read the *Mindfulness of the Excellent Teaching*,³⁰⁶ for it is explained more thoroughly there. Read it repeatedly, and reflect upon what you read.

This portion of the text simply gives us an overview. Well then how about its detailed content? It is in sutras like this one, ***Mindfulness of the Excellent Teaching***. ***Mindfulness of the Excellent Teaching*** describes the four...mindfulness is an action of the mind. Normally we call it “The fourfold stages of mindfulness.” What are these fourfold stages of mindfulness? Body, feeling (sensation), mind, and phenomena. Observe the body to be impure (utterly filthy). Observe feelings as always resulting in suffering. Observe the mind as impermanent (merely one feeling after another). Observe the phenomena as things in general to be dependent and without a nature of their own. Actually this is the fundamental core assertion of Buddhism, the primary root. These four things arise from the truth of suffering, the truth of suffering of [the four noble truths], suffering, origination, cessation and path. Why? Where does suffering come from? From this body, and then upon our bodies, there exist these few things. This body is itself the “body.” And the body and mind do not separate from each other. Therefore in terms of form, there is the body. In terms of the spirit, there are the “feeling” and “mind.” Other than these, whatever that’s not included with the above three [categories], what’s left is the phenomena. In other words, the real content of the truth of suffering is here. We need to go into this in detail, thoroughly read, research and comprehend. Therefore, **“should by all means read,”** and you must certainly read it carefully. Not only should you read it carefully, you must **“read it repeatedly.”** With what you’ve read and understood, **“reflect upon what you read.”** This is what we should do.