



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

**English Commentary Book 4, ver 3.0**

**Chapter 5 The Meditation Session &  
Chapter 6 Refuting Misconceptions about Meditation**

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

## **Purpose:**

This book (version 3) contains the translation of Master Jih-Chang's commentary of the ***Lamrim Chapter 5 "The Meditation Session" and Chapter 6 "Refuting Misconceptions about Meditation"***. 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.

## **References:**

Before each paragraph of the translated commentary, the following references are indicated to help students in learning the commentary:

- Page number of the English Lamrim Book. An example of this is "*Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93*"
- Track number of Master Jih-Chang's audio recording. An example is "*22B, 10.24*"
- Page and line number of the Chinese commentary book. An example of this is "*Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P202, L12*".

## **Translator's Notes:**

Parts with red text are notes inserted by the Translation Team.

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# **CHAPTER 5: THE MEDITATION SESSION**

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***[Lamrim Text Vol 1, P93; 22B, 9.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P202, L8]***

Well, let us continue. Now that we know to rely on a virtuous teacher, relying on a virtuous teacher requires preparation. So, proper preparation is required before and after. At the time of practice, [let's] briefly go over the concept. Nowadays, too frequently we randomly speak of meditation, meditation. Yet, we actually don't even know how to do it. Once we go over the following concept, then we will know, wow! So this is how meditation should be. By then, when we talk about meditation, it will not be too late! See below.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93; 22B, 10.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P202, L12]***

## **2. A brief indication of how to sustain the meditation** **How to sustain the meditation has two parts:**

It just briefly explains the outline of applying the teaching here. What is the method? What is the reasoning? The reason for applying the teaching is such, and this is how to go about it. Now, let's take a look at the text.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93; 22B, 10.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P203, L1]***

- 1. The actual way of sustaining the meditation (Chapter 5)**
- 2. Refuting misconceptions about meditation (Chapter 6)**

First is to clarify the actual method of sustaining the meditation. Second, as for various misconceptions, they have to be refuted, this is very important. If the misconceptions are not removed, your advancement is

impossible. For instance, it is the same with our cooking now. With cooking, either rice or vegetables, if you don't clean the dirt and the pesticides off before hand, sorry! Taking food this way will kill you. This applies to anything [we] do – it is the same for our meditation now. There are many erroneous concepts blocking us, after much effort, alas! No advancement. In fact, not having advancement may be a fortunate thing. Actually, your [erroneous] advancement leads to downfall because it is erroneous practice! Just like this above example, without removing the pesticides or soil from your food, leaving it there without cooking it may be fine, but once you cook it as is and eat it, even if it doesn't kill you, you will at least become seriously ill. Therefore, the next chapter on refuting misconceptions is very important! Now, let's read it further, one [chapter] at a time. The actual way of sustaining the meditation has two parts.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93; 22B, 11.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P203, L10]***

## **a. The actual way of sustaining the meditation**

**The actual way of sustaining the meditation is explained in two parts:**

### **1. What to do during the actual meditation session**

During the actual meditation session, what should be done?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 3, Pg 94; 22B, 11.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P203, L12]***

### **2. What to do in between meditation sessions**

What to do between sessions? Usually, when we refer to meditation, for instance, we talk about morning and evening sessions, prostrations to Buddha, recitations of Buddha's name, and sitting meditation. Then what to do in between the morning and evening sessions? What to do after sitting meditation? The author clarifies every detail for us. Once you have true understanding, by then the unmistakable recognition will arise – ah, within 24 hours, every minute can be properly utilized [in meditation]. This is with regard to time. As for engaging in tasks, no matter what you engage in, they all can be meditation. Such goodness! During meditation, of course, after the session, it is still the same [mindfulness of the teaching]. The same applies to meals and while sleeping! Nowadays we are so pitiful! No need to mention when we have meals or sleep, even during the actual session, we are unable to meditate. We sit there with a wandering mind, even during the morning or evening sessions. Sigh, how pathetic! Now let us see what the author tells us. Well, let us continue, this actual meditation session is divided into three parts.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 12.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P204, L8]***

**1)What to do during the actual meditation session**  
**The actual meditation session is divided into three phases: (1) the preparation; (2) the actual session; and (3) the conclusion.**

This says that prior to meditation, what type of preparation is needed. With this preparation, then what should be done during the actual session, and how to dedicate at the end. The author covers every part very clearly! In fact, our ancient Chinese masters all [gave the



teachings] in the same way, without any exception. Not to mention the profoundness of the great scriptures, for *The Lesser Meditative Serenity and Insight* by Tian-tai school, I believe it is the most simple [meditation training]! It is very clearly described: before meditation, what should be done; followed by the preparation for the actual seated session; and then, [what to do] after the session - the [reference from Chinese lineage are] entering, abiding, and exiting, all three are specified very explicitly! “Entering” is the preparation, “abiding” is the actual session, and “exiting” is the conclusion.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 13:32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P205, L1]***

Hence, with all encompassing, complete, and stainless teachings, definitely abide by these complete steps. It absolutely is not like our meditation now: “Ah! You don’t need to distinguish, just dwell in tranquility.” How can it be that simple! Buddha already achieved beyond the tenth level Bodhisattva - the last mortal lifetime as a Bodhisattva. It is beyond the tenth levels and above the equal-to-ultimate-enlightenment. [With this achievement] Buddha still needed to experience a long period of austerity! How can we by knowing one statement and consider it as thorough understanding, wouldn’t that be a big misconception? This is very clear. Now let’s move on, next it refers to the preparation for the actual meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 14.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P205, L7]***

### **a) Preparation**

**The six aspects of preparation are the activities of Ser-ling-ba.**

Here are six aspects. Remember this next statement! All of this reveals that our teaching here is from a perfect lineage, it is definitely not like our reckless way now. Also, after we listen to this teaching, [we] should know that some will tell you this, others will tell you that. You have to evaluate the lineage that they rely on. Back when I was study, the usual conceptual teaching was placed in the beginning, yet this [Gelug] lineage is not so. In formal teachings, the teacher would always specify that this lineage is from so and so Master. He would make it very clear – so and so is my teacher, and that teacher’s teacher is so, and trace it back to Venerable Atisha or whoever. Then the rest of the preceding lineage you all know, so it will not be mentioned here. Here, do not neglect this statement of the author! Thus, when we are engaging in actual study, if you just want to acquire some worldly knowledge, it is fine to just do some casual chatting; whereas if you are seriously trying to study profoundly, this concept [about following proper lineage] is very crucial. Now, let’s look at the aspects below.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 15.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P206, L3]***

**Therefore, (1) clean well the place where you are staying, and neatly arrange the representations of the Buddha’s body, speech, and mind.**

That is to purify the place and offering images. We clean up the altar of Buddha – to make it very clean, and then we arrange Buddha’s image – this is the first aspect. “Buddha’s body, speech, and mind,” – the “body” is the statues we have now, it can be sculptures or paintings; the “speech” is the scriptures; and what is the “mind”? The “mind” is up to us. As a matter of fact, with the image of

body, speech, and mind, the “mind” indicates personal instructions from a virtuous teacher offering here [in the teaching]. So the mind can also represent relying on the virtuous teacher, and then the transmission of the essence of the teachings into your mind becomes possible, this is the first one. What is the second aspect?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 16.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P206, L9]***

**(2) Obtain offerings without deceit, and arrange them beautifully.**

Offering is the second aspect. There are all sort of stately offerings. Why do so? For example, in the practice of the Hinayana, well, this entails harmful acts on villages and trees that are not allowed\*. Even chanting about it is not permitted. However, in Mahayana practice, our offerings [cut flowers and tree leaves] to Buddha are permitted, they are stately offerings, this is the second. The third aspect, [\*Hinayana precepts do not allow cutting trees, etc., whereas Mahayana permits offering cut flowers.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 16.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P206, L13]***

**(3) Sit up straight upon a comfortable seat in a suitable posture, your legs either in the full or half-lotus position, and then absorb yourself in the practices of going for refuge and developing the spirit of enlightenment. Asanga’s *Sravaka Levels (Sravaka-bhumi)* says to sit in the full lotus posture upon a throne, low seat, or the like in order to clear away obscurations such as longing for desirable objects, and to walk back and forth in order to**

## **clear your mind of the obscurations of sleepiness and lethargy.**

The third aspect is: at the beginning of the actual meditation, a suitable posture is required. So what is the posture? The author is telling us if you are prone to lethargy, then apply circumambulation. At other times, this mainly refers to sitting meditation – in order to be rid of “obscurations such as longing for desirable objects,” apply sitting meditation. What should be done during the seated meditation? The author did not ask us for ascetic practice, “a throne, low seat or the like,” making sure that the seat is as comfortable as possible. However, do not be attached to the comfort! The reason he suggests comfort is not for you [to be side tracked]. During the actual session, there is one principle, which is to one-pointedly focus on your mental activity. Many people in the beginning of meditation do not work on the mental preparation. They start from a seated position and extend to constant-meditation-without-lying down to sleep, alas! This is full of suffering, and such is their practice. Actually, it is making [meditation] to be our own enemy. This is a great loss.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 17.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P207, L10]***

Back then, when my teacher began his teaching, regardless of whether it was the full lotus position or not, if you could sit like that is good, otherwise stretch both legs! When I heard it, others had told me to sit seriously, why is he telling me this? Well, later I realized that to receive the true benefit, this is the way to go. So there was a period of time I went to him specifically for this kind of sitting, and he even said, “Alright, you may lie down.” Ah, amazing! As long as you follow his instructions, whatever that is, the benefits

will arise. However, if you practice according to normal meditation, the seated position is preferred, this is absolutely true. Other taming remedies we will not go into detail now, just making you aware of the concept. Practice according to our [own individual] conditions, so you can practice prostrations or circumambulations, or even lying down to sleep is permissible. Later, it will teach us how to practice while sleeping, how to practice while eating. Of course, these are “the practices other than the actual meditation.” The actual session mainly refers to sitting meditation. Then, next is the fourth aspect.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 18.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P208, L4]***

**\*and then absorb yourself in the practices of going for refuge and developing the spirit of enlightenment**  
[\*This is repeating part of (3) aspect above]

Next, is taking refuge and developing the spirit of enlightenment – these are two different practices.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; [ 22B, 19.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P208, L6]***

Whether it is taking refuge or generating the aspiration for the spirit of enlightenment, how do you go about it? Pay attention to this statement! You must “absorb yourself in the practices” and be determined to make it happen! What is the “continuum”? It is the physical and mental – our bodies and minds. What does it mean by “absorb”? Or what is absorbing? We now have the saying that:

Taking refuge in the Buddha prevents [us from] going to hell;

Taking refuge in the Dharma prevents [us from] becoming a hungry ghost;

Taking refuge in the Sangha prevents [us from] becoming an animal\*;

It is recited. May [I] ask, taking refuge with this mentality, is there conformity with the continuum? Is it conforming to physical and mental integration? There is no integration and it just conforms to the mouth and ear. So ancient masters told us, this is a practice of a few inches between the mouth and the ears. Again, they followed with something very interesting, “the distance between mouth and ear is only a few inches, how can it complement a physical form of a person who is seven feet tall?” Our physical form can be up to seven feet tall, your ears hear what was read from the mouth, and this little bit reading – such small effort - cannot be of any real benefit to you physically or mentally. Actually, the meaning here is: if you truly want to take refuge, your physical and mental aspects need to conform to the teachings. By then, you will feel that you are wholeheartedly relying on the refuge and not anything else.

[\*In Chinese Buddhist community sometimes we see road kills or the like we will chant:taking refuge in the Buddha prevents [us from] going to hell; taking refuge in the Dharma prevents [us from] becoming a hungry ghost; taking refuge in the Sangha prevents [us from] becoming an animal.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; [ 22B, 20.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P209, L1]***

What do we take refuge in and rely on now? Ignorant things – we conform to ignorance. Usually, [we are] dull-witted and sleepy, we take refuge in these; we go for refuge in and rely on eating food; we go for refuge in and rely on chatting; we do all of this. When encountering a bit of displeasure, everyone gets into arguments, just like that.

When you truthfully take refuge, none of this would be needed, just mindfully hold on to the Three Jewels. If you are practicing the recitation of Buddha's name, you really will be so focused; there won't be any extra time to waste. This is truly the time to be in accordance physically and mentally. Therefore, whether it is going for refuge or generating the aspiration for the spirit of enlightenment, [we should] commit to achieve it. This is the principle [of applying the teaching]. Now, what should you do to take refuge? The text continues:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 21.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P209, L7]***

**(4) Imagine that seated in the space before you are the gurus of the vast and profound lineages,**

This is teaching us to visualize the space in front of us – what should be visualized? The “manifestation” that clearly appears [before you]. Who is manifested? The lineage, which is divided into two parts, one is the “vast deeds” lineage and the other is the “profound view.” One represents methods and compassion and the other represents wisdom. The first one was passed down from Maitreya Bodhisattva to Asanga Bodhisattva and on down. The latter was passed from Manjusri Bodhisattva to Nagarjuna Bodhisattva and on down. It began with the Buddha who passed to these two Bodhisattvas [Maitreya and Manjusri], then with every transmission thereafter, generation after generation without any gap, all the way to your teacher, just like that. Then your teacher transmits the teachings to your mental-continuum. Moreover, other than this,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 21.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P209, L14]***

**as well as immeasurable buddhas, noble bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas*, *sravakas*, and those who abide in the Buddha's world. Then visualize the field for accumulating the collections of merit and sublime wisdom.**

That is it. This lineage that begins from Buddha is continuously passed down generation after generation. In the surrounding space above, immeasurable Buddhas, also sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and Dharma Protectors, these are the objects of your refuge. Where do we officially begin our meditation? We begin by going for refuge, and aspiration for the spirit of enlightenment, etc. To whom are we going for refuge? We are going for refuge to this. Therefore, often our earnest chanting of Buddha's name, recitation of Buddha's name, what is Namō? Namō is going to refuge! It is exactly what the recitation is about. Lamrim is a complete instruction, and within the encompassing instruction, we apply whatever Dharma categories accord with us. So you mindfully chant Namō Amitabha Buddha! You would know how to recite it. Once one recognizes this primary principle, and then applies one's specific Dharma category [chanting Buddha's name or Zen meditation etc.], and it becomes very easy. Regarding the reasons for going for refuge, there is also a detailed explanation later. If you truly understood it and apply accordingly, that should be right! What if it did not work? Well, the text tells us below, actually, most of us are not there yet, the author says:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 22.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P210, L9]***

**(5) The cooperative conditions for the production of the path in your mind are (1) the accumulation of the**



**collections, which are favorable conditions, and (2) the purification of your mind from obscurations, which are unfavorable conditions. If you lack these cooperative conditions, it is extremely difficult to produce the path, even if you take pains to sustain the meditations that are the substantial causes of the path.**

If, this is the state of our mental continuum, we lack these virtuous roots, what is required to have virtuous roots? It requires purification of obscurations and accumulation of the collections. The collections are the cooperative conditions for the path. So what gives rise to these favorable conditions? It is the accumulation of the collections. What else? Elimination of obstacles – adversity is an obstacle. If obstacles are not cleared and the collections not accumulated, both conditions are insufficient. What are these two conditions? They are the cooperative conditions for the path. If these are lacking, even if you strive hard to visualize the substantial cause, it is of no use! So, if you do not have these two cooperative conditions, strive hard on the causes of the arising signs – the so-called “substantial cause” is your visualization at the causal stage that you have to strive at. After much effort, the accumulated effect will arise – without these two cooperative conditions; no matter how hard you try, it won’t work. Then what should be done at this point?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 24.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P211, L4]***

**Now you must purify your mind with the seven branches of worship, which comprise the crucial points for accumulating the collections and purifying the mind of obscurations.**

By that time, we need to study the following seven teachings to adjust our mental stream. How do we adjust it? It is through purifying obscurations and accumulating the collections. All these seven teachings include the complete essence of purifying obscurations and accumulating the collections. Actually, these seven teachings are equivalent to our *Ten Great Aspirations of Samantabhadra* (十大願王). Now, when we look at the *Ten Great Aspirations*, it seems that Youthful Sudhana eventually was guided to ultimate bliss. Now I understand, yes: in the end, the guidance will take us toward ultimate bliss, this is absolutely true. May [I] ask, where do you take your first step now? We definitely should not rely on something out of thin air. If your first step at the causal stage is proper, you will continue to advance on the path. In the case where you removed obstacles at the causal stage, then it is right. Your path will be direct. In the end, when you reach the encompassing effect, that is Buddhahood. Why? Achieving Buddhahood is none other than thoroughly clearing away obstacles and accumulating perfect good qualities. Now, these two things – whether it is seven or ten teachings – content all [practices of] clearing away obscurations and accumulating the collections. That is for sure!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 25.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P211, L14]***

Therefore, this is the first step at the causal stage. In the end, the last step is still the same – achieving perfect Buddhahood. It works wonders, and it is this simple! Now we often say, “Alas! This *Ten Great Aspirations* is for practice at Youthful Sudhana’s level.” No, it is not. It is the first step for now, as long as you can take this first step, you will be on a direct path. Once we recognize this concept, the aspiration for rebirth will lead to the highest rank!

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 25.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P212, L4]**

As for the content of these ten, they will not be discussed in detail here, not in detail. I will explain it in a relatively simple way. Why did the author express them as seven branches\*? Why seven branches instead of ten? Here, there are a few different ways to categorize them. Now, when we say obeisance, obeisance is one branch, then praise is another branch. Because they were combined, one branch was merged into another. What else? For the branch of dedication... for us, the branch of dedication begins from "to follow the teachings of the Buddhas at all times (常隨佛學)", "to accommodate and benefit all living beings (恆順眾生)", and "to dedicate all merits and virtues to benefit all beings (普皆迴向)." These are divided into three branches. The author now combined these three into one, so that reduces another two branches. Therefore, in the beginning, he reduces one branch, and two branches at the end. Overall, [ten branches are] combined into seven. Thus, the contents of these seven branches and our *Ten Great Aspirations* are completely the same. You might want to go through this for yourself first.

[\*Chinese version is the *Ten Great Aspirations*, and Tibetan version is the *Seven Branches of Worship* – the content is the same.]

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 26.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P212, L11]**

In the Lamrim [page 94], with regard to this part, now it discusses the actual session. When we say to apply the

teaching – meditation – there are proper principles and methods. Normally, broadly speaking, within the span of 24 hours' time, in terms of activities, in every activity there are none, where practice cannot be applied, even including having meals and sleeping. If you don't understand this principle and are unable to grasp it when practicing the teaching, although you appear to be practicing, actually the substance is missing. Therefore, I wrote this sentence on the board, "Lacking Bodhichitta, even to cultivate virtuous deed is considered a demonic act." This is why too many of us now, regardless of whether we are doing seated meditation, practicing Zen, prostration, reciting the Buddha's name, why is it that we have practiced for such a long time, yet the effect is not very obvious or not very effective. There is some effect; this is something we can be certain of. So what does "not very effective" mean? You practice Zen, hoping to be enlightened but, after much effort, there is no sign of it. [You] apply the method of Pure Land hoping to be reborn there but, after much effort, there is no sign of it either. It is the same for learning the tenets.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 22B, 28.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P213, L5]***

Therefore, we should understand this principle. Upon this understanding, abide by it. Then, regardless of whether you are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, all of your actions [are part of meditation]. Of course, the key is during the actual practice and what to do after the session. Lama Tsong-kha-pa has a complete set of theories as well as proper methods. As I have already explained briefly yesterday, there are six aspects altogether. Actually, yesterday five of them were covered. So up to this point, we only discussed going for refuge. In fact, our study of Buddha Dharma all begins with going for refuge. This is the key

entrance. When referring to taking refuge, we would imagine it to be very simple! Just go to the temple, follow a master, and then accept the Three Jewels as refuge, bow a few times, and maybe sometimes make offerings in a red envelope and that is it. That seems to be considered as [going for refuge]!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 00.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 3 P217, L1]***

Yes, this kind of [rite of taking refuge] is planting a seed at the **causal** stage! Even if the cause is planted, and seems to be very ordinary, it still has laudable significance. However, will this be enough to increase merit? Not necessarily. It depends on the substance, and this substance is absolutely important. If you understood what taking refuge is and abide by it, the effect is immediate. What does it mean by immediate effect? Earlier in yesterday's teaching, we were told that the mental momentum must be accord [with the teaching] - consequently, your physical and mental state must align with the refuge. After all our efforts, how can we be accord with it? To be honest, we lack the know how. Not to mention that the beginners do not know, but even those senior monks who have practiced for a long time do not necessarily have a clear understanding. However, this does not mean the senior monks are completely out of it! Many of them are engaged in it, yet may not understand the concept. This is quite common.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 01.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P217, L8]***

If we are just seeking to benefit the self, which is fine – you simply renounce it, just like the pratyekabuddha who

attained his individual liberation. But upon requesting teaching from him, he is not able to express it. He performs a supernatural act for you, that is it. Many sravaka sages are the same. If we want to learn from the Mahayana teachings now and think about benefiting self and others, the actual objective is to liberate all sentient beings in the Dharma realm. At that time, if you are not able to explain the teachings, then what can be done? Therefore, this concept is very important! In fact, truthfully speaking, if we understand it now, then when you take a stride, it is “half the work and twice the effect (事半功倍)”. Otherwise, we will muddle-headedly spend much effort, and will be uncertain whether this concept of mine is right or not? By chance, it may be correct but, if it isn't, we won't even know that it is wrong and just work ourselves to death, like that. This is spending too much time and getting very little effect.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 02.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P218, L7]***

As for how to absorb the teaching in our mental stream, it will not be explained here. For now, it is just mentioned briefly with a general idea and the outline is provided for you to show you the framework. Later on, when we follow the stages step by step, Lama Tsong-kha-pa will tell us that to genuinely practice the Dharma, the first step is taking refuge. What is taking refuge? How is refuge taken? This is very important, too important! Up to now, I feel that the most beneficial thing in this life of mine is none other than going for refuge. I still remember a few years ago, that time I went to Tai-chung to visit elder Lee [a lay practitioner]. [We] engaged in a discussion, and later I spoke frankly to him. I said I have studied for over a decade but up to now, I discovered that I am still learning about going for refuge. Well, the elder became very enthusiastic when he heard

that! Ah, he also said, that he has been learning this for his entire life, as well!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 03.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P218, L14]***

Take heed! These two words “taking refuge” are not that simple! Just like we have discussed yesterday, saying that we got it, are we certain that we have it? This is a big question! Understanding literally is the worldly way – if you are not able to understand [Buddha Dharma] thoroughly, then dramatic contention and demonic acts [will follow], just like that. Then, now we say, after much effort and we are not able to thoroughly understand, what can be done? Alas! The author tells you the cause is your lack of cooperative conditions. There are two types of cooperative conditions. If obstacles have not been cleared – confession is required. If collections and favorable conditions have not been accumulated, then put in the effort is needed. In this situation, the text tells us to apply the seven branches of worship to “purify our minds.” Purifying means to cleanse and tame, and this is the same as the *Ten Great Aspirations*\*. Now let us look at the text [page 94 line 33]. [\*Tibetan version of *Seven Branches of Worship* = Chinese version of *Ten Great Aspirations*; they differ in grouping.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 04.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P219, L5]***

**With respect to the seven branches of worship, the first, the branch of obeisance, includes the combination of physical, verbal, and mental obeisance. It is expressed in the first verse of the *Prayer of Samantabhadra*:**

The first branch is obeisance. Actually, this branch of obeisance comprises the first and second of the *Ten Great Aspirations*. Within the seven branches, obeisance is divided into general obeisance and specific obeisance of the three [karmic] doors. The general obeisance includes them all; the specific obeisance is physical, verbal, and mental, respectively. The passage is:

**I bow down with a clear mind, body, and speech  
To all lions-among-humans, leaving none out—  
Those who traverse the three times in the worlds  
Of the ten directions, however many there may be.**

This is the verse. The meaning of “however many,” I believe most of us here are quite familiar with the *Ten Great Aspirations*. The objects of obeisance are the three lifetimes [past, present, and future], ten directions, and lions-among-humans – that is Buddha. During obeisance, my practice is clean and pure – these two words of “clean and pure,” do pay attention! That was written on the board yesterday regarding the difference between “purity” and “serenity.” If taken in a broader sense, “purity” can also include “serenity.” If speaking precisely, purity and serenity are not quite the same. As for us ordinary beings, for now, what we are able to apply is purification, this is very important!

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 05.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P220, L1]**

As for these concepts, I will point them out one by one. This is where we should apply our efforts to study. If you can prostrate to Buddha once with a pure mind, the merit is inconceivably and incredibly great - immense! The sutras teach us, well, if you bow to a stupa with a pure state of mind, then, underneath the area your body covers, all the



way to the center of the earth (Vajra-tala-sthāna 金剛際), the soil under it is ground to a fine dust or powder. With each particle as a single unit, then however many particles there are, would mean however many times you would become the universal monarch [v.1 p285], incredible! Now you just casually dig a small amount of soil from underneath our feet, amazing! And from your physical form all the way to the center of the earth, so amazing! Then, grind the soil into powder, thus your merits accumulated from obeisance to Buddha has the same greatness. Therefore, with this word “purity”, don’t take it lightly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 06.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3 P220, L8]***

While prostrating, apply your body, speech, and mind as well as [pay respect to] “all Buddhas,” leaving none out. This is the general obeisance. Thus, it explains below.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 06.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P220, L10]***

**This verse is a sincere and respectful physical, verbal, and mental obeisance that does not simply conform to what others do. Do not take as your object of meditation the buddhas of a single direction in the universe or of a single time. Rather, take all the conquerors who reside in all ten directions as well as those who have already visited this world previously, will visit here in the future, and are appearing at present.**

What we are able to accomplish now is to pay respect with sincerity. To understand “conform to what others do,” what does it mean? There are several types: one is to follow

the external condition. When others bow, you bow as well – when everyone is here prostrating, you have no choice but to follow, just this feeling. In many of our morning and evening sessions, alas, you might attend with afflictive emotion and that is the sign of being influenced by the external condition. Another type is where even if there is no external condition, you are bowing alone, yet the afflictions are churning [in your mind] – this is still not being in concordance. So what is the correct application? That is properly applying the teaching when prostrating. At that time, it would be considered pure obeisance. This is the point and concept.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 07.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P221, L4]***

Now regarding these topics, we all may say, “Oh! Purity is required but not like that.” What is purity? If you have already understood it, then that is very fortunate, so strive at it. Otherwise, continue to study - strive to continue the learning. The details are very subtle or can be said to be very practical. Therefore, for our sincere study of Buddha Dharma, it is not just the superficial, literal understanding. Once you actually have the experience of attainment, it will be very clear in your mind. [Your] moment-to-moment introspective recognition will arise: is this moment contaminated or purified? Is it confused or precise?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P94; 23A, 08.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 3 P221, L9]***

Thus by then, we don't even have to wait until facing death, wow, and expecting to see if Amitabha Buddha will come to [our] aid. How could there be such a thing? By then, it will be too late. With your every thought and prostration at

any given moment, you should be very clear. On a daily basis, what you have accumulated is revealed, the accounting is right there and you can summarize whether you made a profit or loss every day. This record can be viewed very clearly. Day by day it is like this, as well as every month and year. By then, when facing death, you are certainly very stable and assured! What makes the difference [between conform-to-what-others-do and apply sincerely]? One is at a literal, superficial level of understanding; the other is our mental continuum of what the text is leading to. In other words, our physical and mental signs of practice become very clear. Next:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 09.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P222, L1]***

**The master Ye-shay-day (Ye-shes-sde) explains in his commentary,**

This is the explanation of a great master of the lineage.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 09.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P222, L3]***

**"Even if you bow down to one buddha, the merit is immeasurable. What need is there to mention the merit of bowing down while imagining that vast number of buddhas?"**

Even bowing to one Buddha is incredible. With what was just said, the merit of bowing to one Buddha is this much! And now, the obeisance is done in the ten directions and three times [past, present, and future], leaving none out. Can you imagine the greatness of the merit? And this is only one of the seven branches! So this is the general obeisance.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 09.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P222, L7]***

**In regard to physical, verbal and mental obeisance,**

What is next? They are: physical, verbal, and mental [obeisance].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 09.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P222, L9]***

**physical obeisance is expressed by the second verse:**

**I make obeisance to all the conquerors,  
With bowing bodies as numerous as the particles of  
those worlds,  
Perceiving all of the conquerors  
Through the strength of prayers that aspire to  
auspicious deeds.**

**Imagine all the conquerors abiding in all directions and times as if you are actually perceiving them as objects of your mind. Also, as you bow down, imagine duplicate images of your body emanating from your body in a number equal to the minute particles of the buddhas' realms. Moreover, you should have initially been motivated by the strength of deep faith in the auspicious deeds of the objects of your obeisance. The master Ye-shay-day explains, "If even an obeisance with one body has great merit, one with a vast number of bodies has extremely great merit."**

For specific obeisance, that is covered in the following. "I make obeisance to all the conquerors, with bowing bodies as numerous as the particles of those worlds, perceiving all of the conquerors, through the strength of prayers that

aspire to auspicious deeds,” etc. Followed by a few more lines that everyone knows already. This means that, based on time and space, “time” is the three times [past, present, and future], and “space” means the ten directions. What does it include? It includes the Dharma Realm – the immeasurable Dharma Realm – all are included here. Then “imagine” means to use your mind to visualize it. Often, what do our minds cling to? [We] either cling to the external or to what is within the mind – both conform to affliction. Now, it is not the case, so we must conform to it with mindful sincerity – just as though [the Buddhas] are in our presence. So this text is easy to understand. Besides this, Samantabhadra’s laudable deeds are required – “motivated by the strength of deep faith,” just like that.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 11.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P223, L8]***

With our present circumstances, it seems very difficult for us to accomplish. Yes! Indeed. Based on our current condition, it is really hard to achieve. So, under these circumstances, there is a basic concept that we all have to recognize. We are here, ordinary beings studying Buddha Dharma. This is [our] ultimate goal, thus, we look forward to attain the perfectly fulfilled effect [Buddhahood] in the future. May [I] ask if you want to attain the perfect effect, what should the proper cause be for now? [Do you] understand? The text is extremely clear in every aspect.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 12:14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P223, L12]***

So we absolutely should refrain from saying, "Alas, I am an ordinary being!" Is this saying right? It is right. But the next phrase will make a difference. We often say, "Alas, I

am an ordinary being!" Well, then just stop there, sit there and wait for the effect of Buddhahood to fall from the sky. This is totally wrong! The following statement should be, "Because I am an ordinary person, I must work hard at the causal stage to accumulate the collections of sublime causes." Then this is absolutely right. You want to accumulate the collections of sublime causes that require proper approaches! By the time you recognize the proper methods, abide by them, then you will know very clearly and obviously – to advance step by step. Thus, this should be put in this way, "Ah! I am now an ordinary person so I have to strive at once!" You absolutely will not pause right on the spot!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 13.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P224, L3]***

Because of your quick response to strive to advance, well, unknowingly – gradually, gradually – step-by-step, closer and closer, [the goal] gets nearer. It is like our education – any such worldly difficult tasks - well, prior to your learning, [you] stop right there and it feels so difficult! Well, there is a skillful method. First, go to kindergarten. Ah, what does one do in kindergarten? Extremely simple! The kitten jumps and the puppy barks; come come come and go go go. However, these can be learned without being taught in kindergarten! Well, there is a reason for it. Once you are there [in the kindergarten], you become used to it and very pleased. You begin to enjoy it. Then, step by step, you advance unknowingly. By the age of 20 or 30, you will successfully become a greatly learned person. You are proficient in all kinds of things! Along the actual process, you didn't feel that it was that difficult!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 13.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P224, L11]***

So once you are at this level, you will have faith in my saying of, “Practicing the teachings is not hard! At any given time, all you have to do is taking one step forward, but you have to take that one step!” By then, you will notice, have you taken the step? This “step” and “marching in place” are two different matters. To stride is to move forward, marching in place is not permitted [on this path]. If this is not done correctly, we may very well be going backward and then withdraw. The essence is here; the same also applies in studying Buddha Dharma. So what is the topic here? This is about essential quality, quantitative measurement, and flawless systematic order. Eventually, you will reach the level almost equal-to-ultimate-enlightenment or reach the stage of wonderful enlightenment of Buddhahood – it still relies on taking one step forward! Due to this one step, thus our Sakyamuni Buddha, sitting under the Bodhi tree, raised his head and took a look, ah, achieved Buddhahood! Wasn’t it like that? He took that step, too! However, for his step, how did he come by it? That is, well, by building upon this process! For us now, the same applies as well.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 15.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P225, L4]***

Thus, this is the laudable practice of Samantabhadra, if we are on the right track when taking the first step never claim: “Well, these are the deeds for Bodhisattvas at the tenth level!” Sure, these are things for tenth-level Bodhisattvas! But where does it begin? It begins with me, from here on. If you don’t want to learn from Buddha, then go home at once to take time to repent, make offerings to the Three Jewels, and come back when you have

accumulated enough virtuous roots. Once [we entered the monastery] here, it is to officially practice – time to formally start [as a full-time practitioner]. So, for me to express this point, why do I say – for example, we have an elderly senior monk here. Yesterday, one of the monks said: “Well, [the elder monk] deserves the room and board here. Why should I praise the elder monk?” Despite his condition, the elderly senior is still studying diligently here! So for us younger ones, we should feel embarrassed. On the other hand, this elderly senior is truly like a teacher to us.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 15.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P225, L11]***

So now let's continue, well, for us to be able to have the proper understanding at the causal stage, apply accordingly to motivate the pure faith. By so doing, thus [we are] able to generate a huge store of merits! Because of this merit of yours, as for all of your transgressions in the past, they can be balanced and the obstacles can be purified. Once offset, going forward, merits are accumulated. This is the “physical” of the specific obeisance. What about mental obeisance?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 16:26; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P226, L1]***

**Mental obeisance is expressed by the next verse:**

**Upon one particle there are buddhas as numerous as  
the particles of those worlds, and**

**All are seated in the midst of their children.**

**In this way, all are spheres of reality.**

**I imagine conquerors filling all of those particles.**

**Buddhas are seated even upon each of the most minute  
particles and are equal in number to all of those  
particles. Each buddha is surrounded by bodhisattva**



**disciples. Mental obeisance develops belief through recollecting the buddhas' good qualities.**

That is “upon one particle there are Buddhas as numerous as the particles of those worlds, and all are seated in the midst of their children. In this way, all are spheres of reality. I imagine conquerors filling all of those particles.” This is our concept of the “mental” obeisance. Within any single minute particle, there are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas surrounding it equal in number to those particles. What should [we] do about this concept? [We] should develop “belief.” In this paragraph, the key is to “develop belief.” What is belief? That is, toward your object of meditation, affirm it without a doubt and do not be swayed by others. Normally our minds are scattered, which is not the state of “belief.” If belief is developed, doubt will certainly not arise.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 17.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P226, L8]***

So with the above, now we can apply it right away. Once we have this belief, even if I think that I may not be able to see anything [clearly], but I am certain that I am in the midst of ignorance like a blind person who is unable to see. However, there is Buddha's luminosity. Even though I am unable to see the sun - as a blind person is unable to see the sun - yet the sun still shines upon the blind person! So, in your mind, you've reached this conviction. When you think of it, although you cannot see Buddha, if Buddha were vividly sitting in front you, looking at you with his eyes wide open, you naturally will become very respectful and very sincere. Well, by then, the concordant merits will have developed and have increased one by one. This is mental obeisance.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P95; 23A, 18.14; Original  
Commentary Script Vol 3, P226, L14]**

**Verbal obeisance is expressed by the next verse:**

**In praise of all the *sugatas*,  
I express the excellence of all the conquerors  
With all the sound of an ocean of voices in song  
And oceans of inexhaustible praise.**

**First, in accordance with scripture, imagine that immeasurable heads emanate from each of your immeasurable bodies and the immeasurable tongues emanate from each head. Vocal obeisance is expressing with pleasant song the inexhaustible praises of the buddhas' good qualities. In this verse "song" means praise. The song's "voices" are its causes; that is, tongues. "Ocean" is a term for multiplicity.**

This indicates that the original Tibetan version is slightly different from the Chinese [version of the *Ten Great Aspirations*]. This is the second branch [in the Chinese *Ten Great Aspirations*], which is "praising Tathagata." Actually, this is combined into the [Tibetan version] of verbal obeisance; this branch says, "with all the sound of an ocean of voices in song, and oceans of inexhaustible praise." So even though the content may be arranged slightly differently, however, once you have this understanding then apply accordingly, [the effect] should be the same. So for this first branch, it is obeisance and includes the first two branches of the *Ten Great Aspirations*. The second branch is offering, which is the third one in [the Chinese] version.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P96; 23A, 19.26; Original  
Commentary Script Vol 3, P227, L8]**

**With respect to the second branch of worship, offerings, there are both surpassable and unsurpassable offerings. The former**

There are two kinds of offerings. One is surpassable, and the other is unsurpassable. The surpassable is what we consider as the ordinary ones.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P96; 23A, 19.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P227, L10]***

**is expressed by the next two verses:**

**I offer to the conquerors**

**Exquisite flowers, the best garlands,**

**Musical instruments, ointments, excellent umbrellas,**

**Superior lamps, and choice incenses.**

**I make offerings to the conquerors**

**With the best garments, superior perfumes,**

**Fragrant powders piled as high as Mount Meru-**

**All in the most excellent arrangements.**

The verse is, “I offer to the conquerors exquisite flowers, the best garlands, musical instruments, ointments, excellent umbrellas, superior lamps, and choice incenses. I make offerings to the conquerors with the best garments, superior perfumes, fragrant powders piled as high as Mount Meru - all in the most excellent arrangements.” So what about these two verses? It has to do with the most excellent exquisite flowers and fragrance.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 19.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P227, L13]***

**“Exquisite flowers” are wonderful, loose flowers such as those of the human and divine regions. “Garlands” are various flowers that are alternately strung together.**

“Flowers” mean loose flowers; “garlands” would mean flowers that are strung together.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 20.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P228, L2]***

**Both of these terms include all types of real and imagined flowers.**

What is real? It is tangible. What is imagined? It is through visualization.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 20.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P228, L4]***

**“Musical instruments” are stringed, wind,**

“Stringed” means stringed instruments, an instrument with strings. To “blow” is “wind” instruments: brass-wind instruments, or woodwind instruments, which all belong to this group. For example, xiao [a Chinese vertical bamboo flute], flutes, and trumpets are all wind instruments. String instruments include piano and violin; these are string instruments, and this is like our hu-qing [two-stringed Chinese violin], etc.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 20:38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P228, L8]***

**and percussion instruments. “Ointments” are ointments of fragrant incense for the body.**

”Ointments” are used for spreading on the body, to apply on the body. Actually, this is like the lotion used by westerners. Back then in India, they placed great emphasis on this.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 20:58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P228, L11]***

**“Excellent umbrellas” are the best umbrellas. “Lamps” includes luminous precious jewels as well as fragrant and luminous lamps such as butter lamps. “Burning incenses” are single-fragrance and mixed-fragrance incenses. “The best garments” are the best of every kind of apparel. “Superior perfumes” is said to be scented water given in offering bowls, it includes such water as that which is infused with a smell that spreads its odor into a universe of three billion world systems. “Fragrant powders” are equal in height and width to Mount Meru. They are also either alternating rows of colored sand for drawing a mandala or fragrant incense powders suitable to be scattered or burned which have already been wrapped into parcels.**

All the offerings piled up as high as the high peaks, which refer to Mount Meru. So, in other words, it is not necessarily as high as Mount Meru. Since it is surpassable offering, take our worldly terms, it is the maximum and nothing is greater than it. Mount Meru is the king of all mountains, the highest and widest of all mountains.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 22.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P229, L6]***

**“Arrangements” refers to all the above; they should be predominantly good, ornamental, and varied.**

According to the text, it is easy to understand, so read it through once for yourself. This is offering. In any case, offer whatever is the best. Our best things for humans and deities may not necessarily be the most superior or laudable, thus they are called surpassable. So next:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg96; 23A, 22.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P229, L10]***

**The next verse describes unsurpassable offerings:**

Now, take a look, what is unsurpassable offering?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 22.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P229, L12]***

**I imagine all unsurpassable and vast offerings  
For all the conquerors.  
With the strength of my faith in auspicious deeds  
I bow down and make offerings to all the conquerors.**

“I imagine all unsurpassable and vast offerings for all the conquerors. With the strength of my faith in auspicious deeds. I bow down and make offerings to all the conquerors.” This is the one that is considered as unsurpassable.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 22.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P230, L1]***

**Surpassable offerings are those of worldly persons.  
Therefore, unsurpassable offerings are completely**

**good things created by those with power, such as bodhisattvas.**

“Surpassable” would be worldly offerings. Now this “unsurpassable” would be the offerings by the power of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. So do we have this power? No! Don’t worry! This power is the “effect,” and what we can do now is the “cause.” The cause can definitely be done! What we should actually engage now is the cause. So be mindful in all aspects! At the present time, those of us who are sincere about practicing Buddha Dharma are usually unable to recognize [the value of causal stage now], and unable to grasp this idea. We always discuss Buddha Dharma by putting cause and effect aside – this is a fatal flaw in learning Buddha Dharma, a detrimental mistake. Therefore, at our present moment, just ask yourself: my thought at this moment – is it at the causal stage? As long as it is [virtuous], then go for it!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 96; 23A, 23.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P230, L8]***

Of course for this causal stage, they can also be distinguished as indirect and direct. At our present stage, the actual difference is right here. First, is it accurate at the causal stage? Second, even if it is the right cause, it can be near or far, roundabout or direct, great or small – this is one [of the differences]. So even though this [cause] relies on the power of the Buddhas, for us, we can also apply it. Thus, among the three wisdoms – study, reflection, and meditation – Buddhas’ blessing conforms to [our] meditative efforts. Whereas for us now, [we should] abide by the study and reflection. Accord to study and reflection are totally for ordinary beings – thus, this approach is definitely the first step for those of us who are inspired to apply the teaching;

take it all the way to Buddhahood, until we become Buddhas and forever abide accordingly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 24.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P230, L14]***

**The two final lines of this verse should be affixed to all of the above verses in which the sentiment of these two lines is not present.**

That means in previous verses, affix the last two lines. Make [the offering to] all the Buddhas without any omission.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 24.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P231, L2]***

**They indicate your motivation and the intended recipients of your obeisance and offering.**

The aforementioned describes all types of offerings and motivations. What is “motivation?” Do you understand the meaning of “motivation?” Let me explain it to you here. Normally, when we carry out a task, besides engaging in it – actually, in the case of when our minds relate to other objects: with the same mindset, due to the same intention and aspiration, the combined components give rise to the effect. I just explained this briefly, later we will have the opportunity to discuss this in detail. Causally concordant behavioral effects (等流) and motivation [v.1 p.236], in other words, when you are engaging in it, provided the causes and conditions are perfectly without any contamination, that is it. So this is about “offerings.” After offerings, it is the confession of sins.



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 25.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P231, L9]***

**The next verse describes the third branch of worship, confession of sins:**

**Whatever sins I have done  
With body, speech, or mind  
Under the influence of attachment, hostility, or  
ignorance  
I confess each and every one of them.**

That is, “Whatever sins I have done... under the influence of attachment, hostility, or ignorance...” this is the verse.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 25.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P231, L11]***

**The nature of sin is that the three mental poisons cause you to use your body, speech, or mind to actually engage in an activity – that is, to do it yourself – or to enjoin someone else to do it, or to rejoice in someone else’s having done it. So as to broadly include all of this, the verse says, “Whatever.” To confess sin is to recall the faults of your earlier sins and then to regret them. Confess them from the depths of your heart with an attitude of restraint toward future sin. When you do this, you prevent the growth of the sins you did before and discontinue committing them in the future.**

So the previous branches are those of favorable conditions. This branch is to prevent unfavorable conditions and also prevents contamination. If this branch is not

properly applied, then all the other branches will not be fulfilled - all will be contaminated and poisonous, they will not be pure. Therefore, this is especially important!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 26.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P232, L3]***

So with “whatever sin I have done,” why engage in negative deeds? [Because we are] “under the influence of attachment, hostility, or ignorance.” This is divided into three types: attachment, hostility, and ignorance. Altogether they are seen as ignorance, or afflictive views (見惑) and afflictive sentiments (思惑), which are visible to us. Regardless of what you call it, whether it is 108 afflictions... etc., although they are classified differently, the contents are the same. Whatever comes from these - the deeds developed from the physical, verbal, and mental [three karmic doors] are nothing but flawed. “The nature of sin” is whatever I engaged in myself. However, within this nature, there are three types: that which is engaged by yourself, that which enjoins others to do it, or that which rejoices in other’s having done it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 27.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P232, L8]***

Here, with regard to this “to enjoin someone else to do it, or to rejoice in someone else’s having done it,” we don’t pay too much attention yet we often commit these – they are very easy to transgress. For example, I am not on good terms with this person and have this mentality of gloating, what is that? That is: you see your enemy suffering, and the mental activity is, “Well deserved! Well deserved! I am so glad this guy truly deserves it! He is due for this suffering!”

And you think you have the appropriate reasoning! What are you doing, what are you trying to do? So in the *Vinaya* [*sutra of precepts*] – not just for the monastics, even for the five vows of lay people, one of them is about lying. At that time, I couldn't quite understand, but now I do. That is “being a witness to indict someone” – if he committed wrongdoing and you were asked to be the witness, if you saw it and said, “Right! I saw him [doing that].” This is not the right thing to do [in Buddhism]! Well? We may say, “He did commit the sin, I am only speaking the truth, am I suppose to lie?” Well, you think about it, why? Only if you are better than Buddha would this view of yours be correct! If you have faith in Buddha, here is where the crucial point lies.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23A, 28.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P233, L2]***

So never say, “He is definitely wrong” as though I am saying this with great confidence, in this manner. This attitude is wrong! Let's not refer to Buddha Dharma, not refer to Buddhism – [instead, let's refer to] a worldly case. Do you remember that Confucius taught us a classic story? There was a man and his father, the two of them. The father stole a goat from someone else, and the son investigated, and then said his father was the one who did it. Some people would claim, “Oh, this person is really righteous!” When Confucius heard this, he shook his head and said, “The father should keep quiet for his son, and the son should keep quiet for his father. The fairness is within.” I believe many people have heard this story. Thus, the sages' way of teaching is certainly not understood by us ignorant beings.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 00.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P235, L1]***

This father stole a goat, what should be done? The son should keep quiet for the father. On the other hand, if the son steals a goat, the father should keep quiet for the son. Eh? We cannot figure out why. The reason I say this here is not for the purpose of tracing the deeper reasoning. It is to show that, whether one is a worldly saint or supramundane sage, this is their attitude. So, if you feel that you are better than Buddha or better than Confucius, and then you have it your way, which is fine. But if you feel that we are in the midst of ignorance then, sorry, with the above concept, put a question mark on it first. One doesn't need to totally repudiate the idea right away, but analyze: well, why did [the sages and saints] do so, and why is it that I do it that way? If you analyze in this way, I believe the change in perception will arise. At this point, it does not involve confession yet - not looking deeper into it yet. In the future, when discussing confession, [we] will specifically emphasize and explain this clearly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 01.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P235, L8]***

Honestly speaking, the reason I mention rejoicing is that, if you rejoice the worldly contaminated deeds, of course, non-virtue will increase. Whereas if you rejoice in purified deeds, the virtuous attitude is beyond words! In our *Ten Great Aspirations*, the easiest one to practice is the rejoicing of good qualities. However, we don't rejoice good qualities but rejoice negative deeds. That is truly pitiful! Under any circumstance, at any moment, if you are able to apply [the teachings] properly, the good qualities will increase. Therefore, I especially bring it up first.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 01.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P236, L3]***

As for the sins that have been committed [by us], “broadly include all of this.” The next few statements are “to recall the faults of your earlier sins.” The author teaches us that when confessing, first we must know – what is it? It is to feel remorseful about one’s past deeds – alas, how can I be so awful to engage in such wrong acts! Because you feel that it was wrong, then you can speak of confession. Now, we often say, “Well, I am embarrassed, and I confess!” What are you embarrassed about and what are you confessing? One might even feel proud of oneself – hey, that means I know how to be embarrassed and I am able to confess. That has nothing to do with confession and embarrassment, just the lip service of embarrassment and confession, yet it is quite the opposite in the mind.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 01.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P236, L3]***

The sign of embarrassment is realizing that one has engaged in a wrong act and trying to be restrained and humble. However, we often have the habit of speaking about being embarrassed to show off our ability to do so. That is nothing but pride and arrogance, quite the opposite [of being humble]. So, if you truly want to confess, you must know what was wrong and be remorseful about it. May [I] ask all of you, when you confess, do you sense any remorse? Even if there is the feeling of remorse, do you know what to be remorseful? If you don’t, can [I] ask you, what kind of confession is it? Also, when you confess wrong deeds, there must be a comparable standard for what is good and correct. At that time, you can measure and compare: oh! This is right, this is wrong. Just like identifying

counterfeit bills, by comparing two bills, it is very obvious. So, for your truthful confession, you must recognize clearly the proper signs of application and definitely identify the erroneous signs of practice.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 03.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P237, L1]***

Thus, at that time, you will realize, “Ah! If I do it right, there are great merits. Otherwise, there will be great harm.” Well! By then, mentally you really feel miserable and have great suffering – this is considered [genuine] confession. It is not just prostrating to the 88 Buddhas every day how many rounds, wow! Furthermore, I bow to a certain sutras word for word! Certainly, there is merit in doing so. Always remember this – I say this is not to belittle these practices, but these are indirect paths. Thus, this is why we often say: many of our merits are contaminated. When you do it right, this is why some practitioners are able to achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime - the reasoning is right in [the teaching] here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 04.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P237, L6]***

Therefore, this is why the encompassing teachings are so great – they will not ask you to “jump” right into meditation. In the beginning, first, clarify the perception. Once the concept is understood, the signs of practice become clear. Thus, with any engagement of yours, well, you recognize this is right and the other is contaminated. Remove the contaminated ones right away, like that! Due to this, a practitioner can thus stop so much [negative] force within one’s thoughts. In one day, many years of [contamination] can be stopped – it could even be a few

hundred years, a few thousand years, or eons, just like that. So, as we gradually enter the teachings, by the time we finish discussing the small capacity, one of the emphasis is the confession, by then I will remind you beforehand [when to apply confession].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 04.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P237, L12]***

Once you have learned this and then apply confession, the effect is instant; the results can be seen immediately. You definitely will not say, “Alas, after trying to practice for ten years or eight years, are we able to wait until the moment of death to find out if the practitioner’s proper view is clearly distinguished?” No, there is no need to be like that - waiting for others to verify for you [at that final moment]. You will be very clear at the given moment [that your confession is working for you]. Hence, the sutra taught us: if you practiced in the morning, you will notice by nighttime – notice what? The improvement. If you apply the practice at night, in the morning you will notice [the effect]. Why wait until tomorrow morning? With your proper perception at the given moment, you are already clearly aware. Thus, this is how to accumulate merit, and it applies to repenting negative karmic deeds, as well.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 05.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P238, L2]***

If you can apply with “mindfulness,” by then you will do it sincerely without any laziness. Alas! Seeing what I have done wrong in the past and the consequence is so harmful, thus you are unable to bear your own mistakes! By that time, what was taught earlier in the preceding text will start to make sense. It is just like your reflection in the Dharma

mirror, reflecting the smudge on your face. Seeing the smudge on [your] face, at most, people will look at it and say: “Why do you have a smudge?” Now, with the [Dharma mirror] reflecting on your physical and mental smudges, the raging flames of the hell realms await. You can hardly bear it, just like that! Hence, mindfulness is certain to arise.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 06.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P238, L7]***

Why are we unable to be mindful? [It is our] lack of understanding – we don’t understand it! Now, when we endure any amount of minor suffering, “Ah, my head aches, my eyes are blurry.” When [our] physical health is sound, well, the food is not nutritious. No one can endure these [minor sufferings], so is it possible for you to endure the sufferings of hell? This all boils down to ignorance! Therefore, I often say that we apply the practice for a while on the cultivation of “me.” How can this attitude be applied in meditating on Buddha Dharma? Practicing Buddha Dharma is extremely easy! Because we are cultivating this “me,” thus it becomes incredibly hard! The reason is right here. The mind just can’t be focused – I want to meditate, why is the mind so distracted? I want to recite Buddha’s name but why is that I can’t focus? The answer follows.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 06.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P238, L13]***

If you can apply the above, then “you prevent the growth of the sins you did before and discontinue committing them in the future.” What was done in the past will be severed, and committing the future wrongdoing will be blocked. By then, once blocked it will not appear again. Furthermore, after you have purified it, whatever amount is



removed and however much purification will arise. It will not be like our present state: after meditating for a while, yes you may have earned three or five dollars, but the total amount you have to pay is, well, 30 to 50 dollars or even three to five million dollars. Yet you are still not aware of it, how unjustifiable! Based on this, therefore whether we recite Buddha's name or prostrate to Buddha, one chant of Buddha's name has planted the seed to attain arhatship [whereas chanting mindfully plants the seed to Buddhahood] after immeasurable eons, this [short-sighted investment of arhatship] is considered not worthwhile! This shows the difference. However, this is the general aspect! The details will be covered later.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 07.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P239, L5]***

**The next verse expresses the fourth branch of worship, rejoicing:**

**I rejoice in all merit, whatever it may be,  
Of all the conquerors of the ten directions,  
conqueror's children,  
Pratyekabuddhas, those with more to learn,  
Those with no more to learn, and all ordinary  
beings.**

**“Rejoicing” means to remember the benefits of the virtues of these five types of persons, and then to cultivate delight in them as a poor person would with a discovered treasure.**

This rejoicing, “of the ten directions....” I kind forgot about it, do you remember it? This is the rejoicing branch, “I rejoice in all merit, whatever it may be, of all the conquerors of the ten directions, conqueror's children<sup>1</sup>, pratyekabuddhas<sup>2</sup>, those with more to learn<sup>3</sup>, those with no

more to learn<sup>4</sup>, and all ordinary beings<sup>5</sup>.”This is it. It includes these five types, yes, this is rejoicing. So, in this branch, later it will tell us more. Here, it seems to be only rejoicing toward the external objects. Actually, it includes the self in it as well. Rejoice both self and others. Even though you rejoice Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, you can rejoice your own virtuous actions as well. Interesting! When we err, we confess. When it is right, we rejoice. At all times, we are either doing things right or wrong; there is not a time that it is neither right nor wrong - there is no such thing, nothing is neutral.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, Pg 97; 23B, 8.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P239, L14]***

When you are confused or in the midst of ignorance, that is when mistakes are made – even though it seems ethically neutral, to waste and squander life is a mistake. Therefore, at any given time merits can be accumulated or negative karmic deeds can be repented. Then you take these accumulated merits, confessed karmic obscurations, and top it off with rejoicing - thus at any time, at least two encompassing merits can be attained [virtuous ones are increasing, nonvirtuous ones are confessed]. Next

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P97; 23B, 9.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P240, L3]***

**The next verse expresses the fifth branch of worship, imploring to turn the wheel of the teaching:**

**I implore all the protectors,  
Lights of the world in the ten directions  
Who have reached buddhahood, which is without  
attachment,  
To turn the peerless wheel of the teaching.**

**Imploring to turn the wheel of the teaching refers to first imagining that duplicate images of your body emanate from your body in a number equal to the buddhas of the ten directions. You then request them to give the teachings. These buddhas reside in the buddha-realms of the ten directions and do not wait long to teach after awakening into enlightenment and gaining the knowledge which is without attachment and without hindrance. The master Ye-shay-day cites in his commentary the phrase "awakened into enlightenment" and explains it.**

Next is the branch of supplication for Buddhas to remain in this world. So, this is.... oh, what was read was, "I implore all the protectors, lights of the world in the ten directions, who have reached Buddhahood, which is without attachment, to turn the peerless wheel of the teaching." This is "imploring to turn the wheel of the teaching." Therefore, this is beseeching the turning of Dharma wheel. Here, this great teacher of the lineage explained that, with regard to being "awakened into enlightenment," actually gradual enlightenment is proper as well. This includes gradual enlightenment. Upon our actual practice of the seven branches, our visualization should conform to the teaching – the worlds of all ten directions. Because the Dharma realm is immeasurable and boundless, thus the beings that are attaining Buddhahood are immeasurable and boundless as well. This applies to our everyday situations, too. Even if you implore the Dharma Master to teach, this is also turning of the Dharma wheel! Because gradual attainment and gradual supplication, whether as a whole or in part, can be applied anytime and anywhere. This can even be done in relation to imploring yourself: if I am careless and idle here, this is degenerating the Dharma. Alas, at this juncture, if I properly

apply the Dharma, wouldn't this be turning of the Dharma wheel?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P97; 23B, 11.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P241, L1]***

As long as you actually practice it – that should be right! What is the characteristic of the Dharma wheel? First, it is to destroy afflictions. That is, you can apply it physically and mentally to destroy afflictions. This is known as “turning.” Followed by turning it onto other sentient beings – to bring the Dharma to others’ physically and mentally – this is also “turning.” If you can apply it this way at the causal stage, in the end, you will become Buddha! It’s just like that. Thus, we have to recognize “be it self or others” and “be it cause or effect” – our imploring to Buddha now can also be considered as: imploring the Buddha-at-effect-stage to support my mental cultivations at this causal stage. From above, in other words, it is for us to plant the correct cause at the causal stage and fulfill the perfect effect of Buddhahood in the future. This is “imploring to turn the wheel of the teaching.” What about supplication for Buddha to remain in this world? Next, this is the sixth branch.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 12.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P241, L9]***

**The next verse expresses the sixth branch of worship, supplication:**

**I supplicate with palms joined in prayer  
Those wishing to demonstrate their final nirvana-  
Please stay for eons equal in number to the  
particles of the universe  
In order to bring happiness and benefit to all  
beings.”**

This is it, supplication for Buddha to remain in this world.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 12.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P241, L11]***

**Supplication involves imagining immeasurable duplicate images of your body. In front of you are the buddhas in the buddha-realms of the ten directions who are teaching how to pass into final nirvana. You then request that they stay for eons equal to the number of minute particles within each of the buddha-realms in order to bring temporary happiness and ultimate benefit to living beings.**

This is also visualizing the Buddhas in all ten directions and supplicating to them. So, this is what do we do during the actual session of the seven branches of worship, and it is very important! Each and every one of our actions needs to conform to the supplication for Buddha to remain in this world. Why? May [I] ask: can Buddha remain in this world to play a solo show? It will not work; it does not work that way. We have to support him in various ways, for example, this simple Dharma center here! In order to establish it, begin from the very basic requirement: although giving teachings is important, listening to it is even more important! Without an audience, why bother to talk about it. So, by listening with wholeheartedness is to “supplicate.” Then, upon hearing, what is the characteristic of Dharma? In order for the Dharma to be gradually promulgated, upon hearing, if you do not abide by it, wouldn’t that be a farce? The purpose of the teaching is not it, thus, you need to apply accordingly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 13.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P242, L6]***

Therefore, here we often remind everyone: whatever we do here for the monastics is to accumulate merit for the self. So, we shouldn't say, well, I am already doing this at home, when I come here I still have to do the same. Thus, you are wrong! Doing it at home is completely different from doing it here. The tasks you do at home are household activities – they increase the worldly contamination. Whereas [serving the monastics] here enables the Buddha Dharma to remain in the world – reflect on it to see does it make sense? May [I] ask if there is no Dharma center, would Buddha Dharma remain in the world? Of course [not]! Therefore, on one hand, by so doing you are supplicating Buddha to remain in the world. On the other hand, you can rejoice: ah, I have invited Buddha to come, wonderful! I will also apply the teaching accordingly, great! Thus, at any given time, as long as you are skillful in means, then wouldn't anytime be a good time for accumulating merit?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 14.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P242, L13]***

Yet when we actually do chores [in the monastery], [we] have the feeling of being greatly inconvenienced and pucker [our] lips way up. This is a great loss! You waste the time and energy with such a mental attitude – it is a pity that you think of it in this way! Therefore, this is why we are taking this detour. However, because you are physically engaged in it, the [positive] seed of latent propensity is still planted; yet your mental attitude just won't conform. Hence your mental perception is wrong, and it has taken a detour in an unknown direction. For a better effect, rebirth as human or deity is possible, whereas the worse case is downfall to hell

realm. That's how it is! If you can transform [this erroneous perception] right away, then every aspect can be very positive. Therefore, reflect on it: whether it is sweeping the floor, cleaning the restrooms, this applies to everything. Not to mention when we go to the prayer hall and dining hall! With this understanding, ah, for the monastics and the monastery, the beauty is beyond words! This is "supplication for Buddhas to be in this world," the next is "dedication."

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 15.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P243, L6]***

**The next verse expresses the seventh branch of worship, dedication:**

**Whatever merit I have accumulated, however slight,  
From obeisance, offering, confession,  
Rejoicing, imploring, and supplication –  
I dedicate it all to enlightenment.**

That is "Whatever merit I have accumulated, however slight, from obeisance, offering, confession, rejoicing, imploring, and supplication – I dedicate it all to enlightenment." In our *Ten Great Aspirations*, there is a very long section, a very long section that includes: constant learning of Buddha's teachings, always benefiting others, dedicated to all beings. These are all included. So, this [branch] summarizes them all - all of the previous six branches.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 16.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P243, L10]***

**Dedication refers to never exhausting any of the roots of virtue--which are illustrated by the above six branches of worship-**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 16.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P243, L12]***

Actually, all the abovementioned virtuous roots are all included.\*

[\*The English text 段落切合與中文有些出入.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 16.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P244, L1]***

**because you have dedicated them with strong aspiration as causes of complete enlightenment for yourself and all living beings.**

[We] can group all of the above and dedicate them to what? Dedicate to all sentient beings collectively, including myself. With “strong aspiration” – note these words, which were mentioned earlier. The reason why we lack strength is because our attitude is lax and inattentive, just like that. Of course! This is our habit from the beginningless time; it is the causally concordant state of consciousness [v.1 p.236], which makes it difficult for us to be motivated [to get rid of this erroneous attitude]. Thus, even though you are wasting your life here and planting petty virtuous causes, however, it is not enough to produce virtuous effects; this is why. Therefore, at any given moment, your mental momentum must have strong aspiration with full attention, just like that. If you can practice it this way, that should do it, it will work!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 17.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P244, L8]***

So, such dedication is the great spirit of enlightenment. Normally, when we dedicate, we dedicate to



Bodhi [enlightenment], to all sentient beings, and to the true nature of reality. Because of this, we can say that benefiting all beings is the same as dedicating to all sentient beings, and the constant learning of the teachings is dedicating to this enlightenment as well. The last branch is dedication. Your specific and collective dedications are to attain the true nature of reality.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 17.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P244, L11]***

**While understanding the meaning of the words of these verses in this way, slowly recite them as indicated without distraction. Once you do this, you will have an immeasurable mass of merit.**

To understand it as described to us above, thus the “text” and “meaning” are thoroughly understood. What does “meaning” refer to? That is the content of it. If you truly understand the content and practice it with strong aspiration, that is when your mental continuum is concordant with the teachings. This is truly important. In the case where your mental stream conforms to what you are mindful of, you understand the text and the conformity arises within, then, at that time, there will be immeasurable good qualities, inconceivable merits, incredibly excellent! So now with the aspiration to be reborn in the Pure Land, why would you not end up there, how can it be possible! The reason is right here. So, the author taught us “without distraction,” don’t leave anything out. By so doing, “you will have an immeasurable mass of merit,” all merits are inclusive. This is the explanation, next it continues:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 19.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P245, L6]***

**You accumulate the collections of merit and sublime wisdom--the favorable conditions--through performing the five branches of obeisance, offering, rejoicing, imploring, and supplication. Through confession you clear away the obscurations, which are the unfavorable conditions.**

Well, so obeisance, offering, imploring, this “supplication” is asking for the Buddha to remain in this world and so on. In addition to rejoicing, these five branches are the “favorable conditions” for “accumulating the collections of merit and sublime wisdom.” Confession is to “clear away the obscurations.” Confession must be able to stop your current obstructions and prevent them from arising again. This is what I have specifically explained just now. You need to know the purpose of confession. If you don’t, then the root of the issue will always be there, and you will never find the cause of it. Your effort will be of no avail. Just as though you are patching a leak, but you don’t know where the leak is, even after you spend so much time searching for it, that won’t work. So, we often say that this is an imposter or fake doctor. There is a joke about this, a story. There was one person came to cure your illness. If you have a growth on your body, he might smear some poultice on your sore, powder it up to make it look like skin and say, “Ok, it’s done now, it will heal!” Is this effective at all? Totally useless, the root of the cause is still there! So, our confession is the same. We only seek to look good, “Well, [medication] is applied, and it should be fine now!” But the root cause gets even worse! So, in this case, the obscurations cannot be cleared.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 20.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P246, L4]***

**Cultivating delight in the virtue that you have done-- which is part of rejoicing--will also increase your virtue.**

This was mentioned earlier; self-rejoicing is also encouraged and can be applied toward others too.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 20.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P246, L6]***

**You may have few virtues as a result of accumulation, purification, and increase, but you will expand them enormously through dedication.**

Dedication has a very special effect. Often for us, like what has mentioned above, regardless of whether we are purifying obscurations, accumulating the collections, or increasing the virtuous roots, usually the virtue is minor. If you can dedicate to continuously multiply the petty actions, [the virtue] can even be increased immeasurably. Thus, this point is very crucial! However, up to now, this “dedication” is easy to say but not so easy to practice by us now, not too easy. The reason for it being difficult is that we do not know how - lack the knowledge for how to dedicate.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P98; 23B, 21.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P246, L12]***

We cannot say that we do not know! At the end of every session, saying, “Oops, forgot to dedicate.” Everybody stands up and recites the four or eight verses. You can’t say that you don’t know [about dedication]. However, does the mental stream conform to the verse? [You] do not know how to conform to it. In this regard, [the understanding of dedication] is still not quite there yet. Once you truly conform to it, the merits will multiply endlessly, the collections will

grow immeasurably. All the way from the *Ten Great Aspirations* to just recite Buddha's name once, it all comes down to this [mindfulness]. So, when reciting Buddha's name, why do we add the word "Namo"? This "Namo" has the meaning of dedication in it, and that is just so inconceivable. This concept will be reviewed again later.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 22.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P247, L5]***

**Although virtuous effects may arise temporarily and then dissipate, through dedication they will never dissipate.**

How wonderful! Now, at the causal stage, it makes your merits multiply continuously. This is the cause planted in the past, since now the effect is about to be exhausted, due to your dedication in this manner, it continues to increase and expand.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 22.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P247, L8]***

**To summarize, the seven branches of worship are included in the following three: accumulation, purification, and bringing about an expansion and a lack of dissipation.**

Taking all of the seven branches or the *Ten Great Aspirations*, they can be combined into three categories: the first category is the purification of sins. The second is to accumulate the collections. However, our normal practice is limited. Now, with the addition of dedication, it will increase indefinitely. This is the ultimate benefit of certain-goodness, and this is the specific characteristic that is only found in

Buddha Dharma. May [I] ask, with all of your present misdeeds, try to recognize them and eradicate them from the root; then, with all the merits accumulated, thus multiply them unceasingly. What else must be done? That is it! Just like that. So now is the time for us to take our first step, in the end when all is perfected, naturally, Buddhahood will be attained.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 23.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P248, L1]***

So, the guiding to ultimate bliss may not be limited to the Pure Land of the West that we know of, a broader meaning can also be applied. Why? In the Pure Land of the West, what is the name of the Buddha? The Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Life (無量光壽). “Immeasurable” means there is no end. “Light” means wisdom; “Life” is blissful merit. When both wisdom and blissfulness are perfectly fulfilled, what would that be? Perfect Buddhahood. There is no exception among the worlds of all ten directions - they are all the same. Thus, it is known as Pure Land.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 24.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P248, L5]***

As for us now, well, if you practice accordingly, the projected destination is the ultimate state that every being will reach. Thus, the state described in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*, well, this dedication appears in the *Array of Stalks Sutra*. But the Pure Land in the *Array of Stalks Sutra* is slightly different\* from the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. To claim they are the same means that you are equating both narrow and broad aspects. If you claim they are different, then the narrow and broad scopes are

different. I believe we should be able to understand. A simple analogy: I claim that I am a human. Conversely, can I say that all humans are me, does this make sense? If “all humans have to be me” then what about you? Well, there is only one human – me – the rest of you are goblins and monsters. What is the fault in this? This is the fault of ambiguity between the narrow and broad aspects. There is no mistake in claiming that I am a human; so are you all. Within the broad aspect, I am one of them. This must be distinguished clearly. Certainly, the *Amitabha Sutra* (阿彌陀經) is the most skillful approach for entering [the Pure Land], there is no doubt about it. However, there is a difference and I just mention it in passing.

[\*Pure Land state in the *Array of Stalks Sutra* is considered broader than in the *Amitabha Sutra*.]

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 25.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P248, L14]**

So this was the fifth aspect [v.1 p.94], which is: if you lack the conditions to advance, practice these. Once you have practiced it, will taking refuge arise immediately? No, there is one more aspect [v.1 p.99].

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 25.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P249, L1]**

**(6) Then, once you have pictured in your mind the objects of the mandala and have offered the mandala, make the following supplication many times with strong aspiration:**

Because you have practiced the fifth aspect, when you take refuge, it will arise [in your mind]. So, if you go for

refuge to the Three Jewels now, as long as you switch to this [meditation object], Buddha will appear. Your refuge to the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha will arise clearly and will be visible, such greatness! Is it just so? No, not like that. If it is just so for you, then what path are you on? In general, that [aspiration] will be the medium or lesser aspiration. So, under this condition, even though you might say, “Oh, I want to become Buddha.” Many have first gone to Pure Land and attained arhatship. Why? That is because, at the causal stage, the aspiration is of a person of medium or small capacity. Here, this causal stage is different – one has to generate an aspiration of a person of great capacity.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 27.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P249, L9]***

By the time you meet Buddha, and say, “offer the objects of a mandala.” “Mandala” is what we call an altar city, which is the altar for all Buddhas. In other words, it represents the most perfect, enlightened form, and you should offer to them.

That mandala must come from our visualization, and this is recorded in *the Biography of Venerable Atisha*. Back in India at that time, especially in the Tantric practices, actually, it was already part of the Mahayana tradition. When it was required in an important occasion, for instance, confession or the like. It could be any time or anywhere, and it didn’t necessarily have to be for confession, it could even be in a situation where you are praying for something. For the offering we have now, other than [unsurpassable] offerings, in general, we as ordinary beings make surpassable offerings. And at the causal stage, we learn to offer unsurpassable offerings. That is to offer [the mandala]. Then we offer to the 3000 world systems,

together with the Buddha realm, and this is a ritual. Moreover, it describes how to visualize it. Once you have visualized it, follow it to “make the following supplication many times with strong aspiration.” After offering, what is your purpose, why do you want to take refuge, why offer? My intention is to ask for this - [the unsurpassable offering] is what I wish for.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 28.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P250, L3]***

**Please bless all living beings — my mothers — and myself so that we may quickly stop all flawed states of mind, beginning with not respecting the teacher and ending with conceiving signs of true existence in the two kinds of self.**

This is the unfavorable condition. It is to purify opposing conditions and plead for Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to bless me, to eradicate all my obstacles. So, from where does adversity start? It begins with not respecting the teacher. Why does it begin from here? Because the root of studying Buddha Dharma is to first rely on virtuous teachers. If you disrespect the teacher, very sorry, you totally don't even know what the root cause is. If you are not able to encounter virtuous teachers, there is absolutely no chance to study Buddha Dharma! This we need to understand. So, the first is to eradicate [flaws]. Then in the end, what is your projected goal? It is to thoroughly stop the conceiving signs of true existence in the two kinds of self – “selflessness of the person and selflessness of knowledge.” Therefore, “ending with”, in other words, from the beginning until the very end, the two conceiving signs of the true existence can be totally purified – they are the unfavorable conditions. Thus, next...



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 23B, 29.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P250, L12]***

**Please bless us so that we may easily produce all flawless states of mind, beginning with respecting the teacher and ending with knowing the reality of selflessness.**

Conversely, the unfavorable conditions are cleansed and favorable conditions are increased.

***[Lamrim text boook Vol 1, P99; 23B, 29.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P251, L1]***

**Please bless us to quell all inner and outer obstacles.**

Besides, there are other related obstacles, pray for Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' blessings to eliminate them all. Once [the obstacles are] eliminated, then naturally it will become very easy, pretty easy for you to apply the practice!

***[Lamrim text boook Vol 1, P99; 24A, 00.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P255, L1]***

So, what is this section about? It is our preparation prior to the actual session, the preparation beforehand. Because you have this preparation, by the time you engage, the effect is immediate. Most of the time, we often feel: "Alas! It seems like talking about it is not useful, might as well attend a seven-day retreat." Sure! It's correct, but what is the issue? It is a lack of understanding of systematic order. Many hurriedly ask for time off and rush to the monastery [trying to find out] proper manners for the first day and the second day ... by the time you are familiar with

what to do, it is time to go home. Once at home, you might still feel, “Ah, I’m so happy. I completed a seven-day retreat!” But is there actual accordance? Not necessarily. If you truly have proper preparation and are prepared in advance, by the time you spend one day in the monastery, you will immediately see the effect, just like that. So, ancient masters have many such stories about why [they chose] that path to achieve their thorough enlightenment! Well, [their way] can be rather quick - as long as one is willing to come, [the ancient masters] definitely can help us to gain great benefits – one can attain great benefits, no need to mention our present petty pursuits. The fundamental cause is right here [to have proper preparation]. Now let’s take a few minutes break and resume later.

***[Lamrim text boook Vol 1, P99; 24A, 01.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P256, L1]***

Now with the above foundation, then we can engage in the formal practice. That’s why it’s called the actual session. Once you build upon this foundation to advance, the effect is immediate. It is the same if we were to build a house. If we sketch a plan, after sketching for a while, it is still on paper. Yet if we actually start engaging in the construction, when you build on top of the foundation, then the effect happens right away. Immediately, a multi-story building is erected. It’s the same with our application of the teaching. If you properly clarify each stage and establish the proper foundation, then when you engage, the effect is spontaneous. Therefore, at any given time when you engage in the actual session second by second, with the application of the previous second, the next second you will feel that you have gained another second. One more second later, again you feel that you have gained another second. This is that effective! So swift! And with such

practicality! It is definitely not something shaky and vague. So now let's take a look at what the actual session is.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 2.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P256, L9]***

**a) Actual session**

**1) How to sustain the meditation in general**

This “meditation in general” subsumes an outline for applying the teachings. It is a short section, yet it reveals to us the entire framework of the subsequent path. All the guiding principles are completely mentioned here and totally covered. However, [let's] not think of it as a standalone section. If you do not have the preparation ahead of time, this section will not be useful. Furthermore, if this section can't be connected with the subsequent section, [the practice] will not be fulfilling. There is the definitive relationship between them that we should understand. Let's take a look at it now.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 3.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P257, L1]***

So now, regarding meditation, how to go about it?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A; 3.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P257, L3]***

**That which is known as “meditation” is the act of sustaining an object of meditation and specific subjective aspects by repeatedly focusing your mind upon a virtuous object of meditation.**

With just this one statement, what is meditation? “Repeatedly” means to continue with no interruption, uninterrupted; uninterrupted to do what? To “sustain and protect” our object of meditation and specific subjective aspects. What is “focusing upon”? What is the sign of “focusing upon”? “Focusing upon” is like what we often describe as the monkey clinging to something such as the tree. For ancient scholars, it is called “focusing.” Now we would call it “grasping”, just like that. This grasping hand is an external sign. Now, our minds also grasp onto something in the same way. When a mind grasps something - this is the subjective aspect of the mind - which is your psychological activity. That is the state [of grasping], and the text describes it clearly. Moreover, we should be very clear with the state of mind as well. Most of the time, theoretically we say, “Alas! What is the cause of our state as ordinary beings? [The cause is] attachment to the two kinds of self.” What is the meaning of attachment? That is grasping, you are focused on clinging to it. What are you clinging to? You are focusing and clinging on both the selfness-of-the-person and the selfness-of-knowledge. So now our practice is to do away with [both kinds of self]. Well, excuse me! The author did not ask us to get rid of it. The focus is still required – but we should now cling to a virtuous object. However, what we focused on before was nonvirtuous. So, this is the definite order of applying the teaching, the required steps.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 5.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P257, L14]***

That is to say, the focus in the past was nonvirtuous. What is the characteristic of the non-virtue? It brings negative effects to self and others. In contrast, virtue brings positive effects to self and others. Thus, virtues are gained gradually step by step from high-status to certain-goodness.

Our present mental clinging is our mental activity - the “compositional activity” of feeling, craving, and consciousness. The sign of this compositional activity is known as the “subjective aspect.” This is what the text says. Moreover, perception-wise we have to be very clear and distinct about the true nature of reality. What is our present mental subjective aspect? [We need to] slowly and gradually understand that [we are] in the midst of ignorance. The sign of ignorance is that you can’t distinguish the good from the bad; [we are] just this muddled and dull-witted. When a stronger state arises, there can be two types: one is favorable, this is the sign of attachment; the other one is rejecting the unfavorable, this is the sign of hostility. If all of you can apply careful examination, you will be able to spot it immediately. There is no exception, as we all have these feelings. And it is the characteristic of humans to be able to sense them – among the three existences [desire, form and formless] and the six realms; “humans” have the strongest and most powerful senses. Thus, that is why only the human realm has the ability to apply the teachings, this we should understand.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 6.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P258, L10]***

When we see an enemy approaching, upon seeing him, your anger arises within, just like that. And when you see a delicious food, you start to drool at the sight of it, that’s how it is. Sometimes you don’t see the subjective aspects of your mind; or rather it should be put this way: that you didn’t pay attention to it. It seems like your mind hasn’t been stimulated. However, the subtler sense is already aroused - the subtler layer is already stirred. You might give it a try. Let me share with you one of my experiences. One time, I accompanied someone to take an X-ray. What was it for?

The stomach. You know, to take an X-ray of the stomach requires first ingesting something called barium sulfate. When taking the X-ray, the rays will go through and show nothing. Once barium sulfate is ingested, the rays will be blocked from going through and will be unable to penetrate the tissue. The barium sulfate will reflect a shadow, so the stomach wall needs to be coated, right? Thus, from the edge of the barium sulfate shadow, you can see what the stomach looks like. That day when I went there, the doctor first...I stood behind the doctor and looked. The doctor all of a sudden asked the patient, "What do you normally like to eat?" Then this person started to think, after a while, the doctor stopped asking, that was it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 7.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P259, L6]***

I wondered, why did the doctor ask him, "What do you normally like to eat?" Later the doctor pulled me aside and pointed to something. By looking at it, well, then I realized something, realized what? Earlier the patient wasn't thinking, so the stomach did not move. If it wasn't moving, you are not able to see, for it went still! So, you couldn't see it clearly on the film. When the doctor asked him, "What do you like to eat?" The patient did not think of anything specific, yet the stomach began to rumble and roll with great motion.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 8.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P259, L11]***

At that time, I didn't quite understand it. It was only when I started to study Buddhism that I was gradually affected by it. In the future, you will certainly experience it. For example, we often say, "Alas, don't generate

attachment!” But once you are at the dining table, it is impossible not to be attached. I believe we all have this experience. Why? For at the time, the subjective aspect is already very strong, already very fierce. So, frequently people say, small leaks should be patched. Otherwise, when the leak widens, it will be difficult for you to mend it. Our mental activity works the same way. When it is very subtle, I may not detect it, but once we are at the dining table, [the sign of attachment] becomes very coarse and strong.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 9.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P260, L2]***

Now that I recall that was the typical case. The doctor asked the patient, “What do you like to eat?” The patient thought about it for a while, and the mind was stimulated. Once the sentence was heard through the ear and passed to the consciousness, the stomach began to rumble and grumble. And he actually thought about eating a certain food, at that moment, the intention [of grasping this certain food] could still be blocked. But, if it were during a meal, it would become difficult to prevent the desire to eat the food. This process [to identify the mental activity] is very long and, gradually, we have to clarify it. So here I want to specifically point this out to you all, we should not just read the text, instead, you have to recognize the signs of your mental activity. For now, what is our present subjective aspect in mind [in the classroom]? Staring with wide eyes at the board, looking at the teacher, this is our subjective aspect in our minds. If someone comes to interrupt, everyone would turn around to look, “What is happening?” That is the subjective aspect in your mind. If it does not arise, we will not notice it. Once we talk about it, you will immediately become aware of it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 10.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P260, L11]***

Moreover, most of the time our mental activity conforms to ignorance – the three mental poisons of attachment, hostility, and ignorance. Now, [we] need to transform it, that’s all. Thus, applying the teaching is nothing but meditation. What is meditation? It is to mend what was wronged! So, we refer to “feelings, perceptions, compositional activities, and consciousness,” then why do we want to mend “compositional activity”? Instead of mending the “perception” or the “feeling”? Or mend the “consciousness”? The answer is below. I ask you this as a quiz first. This is very relevant! Thus, every word has its specific definition. The subjective sign of application cannot be slightly mistaken at all - I am letting you know this ahead of time. Furthermore, this is virtuous and that is nonvirtuous; upon understanding, I transform myself by mending it. However, due to the latent propensity from beginningless time, you continuously want to protect [the non-virtue]. So, to “focus and protect” is to safeguard it and repeatedly mend, practice again and again to refine it. In the past, the mind was constantly in a distracted state throughout the day or clinging to something. Now, you want to avert it from non-virtue, and sustain it on virtue without wavering, to make it serviceable according to your aspiration – to be under your control, just [focusing on] this one task.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 11.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P261, L6]***

Now you want to recite the name of “Amitabha Buddha”, you want to visualize “Amitabha Buddha”, what were we mindful of in the past? It was none other than



attachment, hostility, or ignorance. Now, these are unwanted and need to be replaced with mindfulness of immeasurable light and longevity [Amitabha Buddha's other name]. Then we practice these. [The mind] won't listen to you – you repeatedly bring it back, sustain and abide on this mindfully, and do not waver, right? Isn't it so? Well! That is it. It doesn't matter what your chosen practice is, if you are practicing Zen, no, don't visualize [Amitabha Buddha] but visualize something else. "Who is the one mindful of the Buddha?" "What is the sign of true self?" "Where does the one reduce to?" "All phenomena are reduced to one, where does the one reduce to?" Then Zhao-zho [Chinese ancient Zen Master] said, "What is non-ness?" All of these can be subsumed into one phrase: the past habit of conforming to the three mental poisons is replaced by focusing on these [mindful contemplations]. As for the "tenet school," it has a different set of methods. In fact, their approaches, well! Extremely brilliant and skillful! However, we haven't received the complete teachings, not knowing the contents at all, yet are stuck on the literal meanings. Later in the Lamrim, it will reveal more about this concept [the essence of mind training]! Next explanation is why should we do so? It elaborates,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 12.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P262, L1]***

**The purpose of this is as follows. From beginningless time you have been under the control of your mind; your mind has not been under your control.**

Because what happens to our latent propensity from beginningless time? This mind of ours, the aspiration of ours – "controlled by the mind" – this mind is our conscious mind, this is what we should know. Our minds are like a frisky

monkey or cantering horse. It is the conscious mind that is circling in this cyclic existence, from the beginningless time it is “in control” – it has its own free will. When it wants to sleep, you try but just can’t wake it up, just can’t. Then when it is time to go to bed, you want it to sleep, but it won’t. At that time, you suffer, too. Now that you know you shouldn’t be greedy, alas! It is out of control; to direct it not to get angry, it won’t work. However, this happens to us often. Therefore, from beginningless time, we are controlled by this mind. You want it to listen to you, to chant Buddha’s name but it won’t, to practice Zen but it can’t, to calm down but it won’t. Thus, “your mind has not been under your control,” and you cannot be in charge. This is our flaw, obviously [we] are not in control yet we think that we are. What is this “I”? It means being in control - I can be in control! Alas, how pitiful! In fact, with this condition, not only will it not listen to you, what is even worse is, what direction will it go?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 14.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P262, L12]***

**Furthermore, your mind tended to be obscured by the afflictions and so forth.**

That’s what’s most serious! This conscious follows what all day? Whirling around affliction – this is the greatest obstacle. Another name for affliction is ignorance. The signs of ignorance are attachment, hostility, and foolishness, and even include afflictive view, afflictive sentiment, the ten dull and ten distinctive afflictions, or 108 of them depending on different classifications. Because of this affliction, we are involved in nonvirtuous deeds and negative karma arises from them. Well! These are the causes. Otherwise, if you are comfortable there, why bother practicing? The feeling is

pretty good, just flow with it. Because [the afflictive mind] is not good, that is why you need to transform!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 14.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P263, L4]***

**Thus, meditation aims to bring this mind, which gives rise to all faults and flaws, under control and then it aims to make it serviceable. Serviceability means that you can direct your mind as you wish toward a virtuous object of meditation.**

Because it is wrong, you need to mend it. What do you do to mend it? So, this mind can listen to me and do what I wish. “Serviceable” means pliable, able to do what I wish it to. What do I wish for? “Direct your mind as your wish toward a virtuous object of meditation.” It is just that simple, that is it. Why do you want to “sustain the mind toward a virtuous object of meditation”? Because if you focus on the virtuous object that will lead to a virtuous effect. Honestly speaking, studying Buddha Dharma is certainly the common purpose for all worldly beings. People often think, “Well! You are superstitious.” Those who consider so are muddled, extremely confused! Maybe you should ask them: what are you so busy for? One wants happiness. How to achieve happiness? Well! Here, the text tells you how to be happy [by focusing on a virtuous object of meditation]. With the true recognition of this, there will be no exception, everyone will definitely take this path – study Buddha Dharma, that is it. So, Buddha Dharma is certainly the greatest education in the world, and this accurate education only exists in Buddha Dharma, it cannot be found in anywhere else. It tells you how to attain happiness and how to eliminate suffering – isn’t this common to all beings in this world! Actually, it is not just limited to humans but includes all living beings.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 16.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P263, L14]***

Upon the explanation above, the next part is very important! The above section points out the content – that is, to “establish assertion” and what else? The following are the flaws we often engage in, they have to be eliminated.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 16.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P264, L2]***

**You might try to sustain your meditation by jumping to this and that object of meditation.**

This is our normal state of mind. We say we want to meditate, so we set out! Thus, you engage in whatever you come across, “jumping to this and that object of meditation.” That is our present state – you go for it. Under this circumstance, it is harmful! Next, the text tells us.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 17.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P264, L6]***

**You may consider setting up according to your wish a variety of virtuous objects of meditation in no specific order. Though you may do this, you will not be able to take up your object of meditation with this method. Consequently, you will greatly hinder your mind’s ability to be directed as you wish toward a virtuous object of meditation.**

In this situation, we engage hastily in the hope of having a speedy achievement. However, what kind of effect will be produced? It won’t work! So, at this stage, as for how to handle your aspiration, the author specifically added: “in the

specific order.” Your aspiration must be handled with a specific order. Because of your random practice, you lack the understanding. While applying earnestly – there is so much of the required content and specific order – you are not able to recognize this “virtuous object of meditation,” and you make mistakes, thus the effect will not arise – “you will not be able to take up your object of meditation with this method.”

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 17.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P264, L13]***

So, this is the description in the text, we might as well reflect on it. For each one of our experiences: I want to practice Zen, did it work? I want to recite Buddha’s name, was I mindful? I want to confess, was it effective? Alas, it just won’t work. I believe everyone has this experience, right! You wish to recite with full concentration, yet you end up being distracted. You want to visualize Buddha, and it just won’t arise. You try not to be attached and [the mind] wants to stick to it. You want to calm down, yet you can’t help but get angry. Why? Well! This is it. The virtuous objects of meditation you aspire to, just can’t be taken up as “your object of meditation”! The author did not say there is a possibility, he just tells you it is definitely impossible – these are the words from the virtuous teacher. What is the cause? It’s the preceding phrase; “you might try to sustain your meditation by jumping to this and that object of meditation.” Our marginal encountering [of the teaching], wow! We think that we are on the right track and think that it is meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 18.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P265, L7]***

However, here is the clarification: eventually, the [jumping to this and that object of meditation] effect will still be there, just whirling around for immeasurable eons. By then, if you meet Buddha and he will teach this to you, so [you] will know it properly. However, by that time, what will he still tell you? He will still tell you this content in its entirety, and you still have to follow the stages to achieve. In between, you have traveled in such a big circle, for what? For a detour and suffering that was not justifiable. If, at that time, you sit there, whether it is arhatship or Buddhahood that will fall from the sky, [you] might as well take it easy – well, practicing the teaching is so much trouble. You might as well just sit here and wait for [the effect] to fall from the sky - I might as well wait here. It does not work this way! By then, you still need to follow the systematic order without any laziness, practice properly. May [I] ask you, why not do it now? Why do you have to wait until then, after enduring incredible, unjustified sufferings? This is very obvious and clear. Not just theoretically, reflect on it you will realize right away, this is absolutely true!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 19.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P266, L1]***

So, up to here, I want to bring something up in passing. Those of you who are new and are sitting in the back row may not have experienced hardship, may not understand a lot yet. Those who have had some hardships... reflect on it and it will become very clear! Some have been ordained for a year, some for two years, and this summer I've met monastics who have been ordained for 30 years, and the experience is still the same - that is, he is unable to achieve what he wished for. Not that he is careless or that he is wandering around outside [of the Buddhist community]! Alas! He was secluded in a mountain shack and meditated

diligently. Everyone thought, wow, this is a great practitioner! This is due to not having the proper systematic steps, what he aspired to is the “virtuous object of meditation” yet was not “able to take up your object of meditation.” In our contemporary terms, you want to recite Buddha’s name and to aspire to be fully focused, mindful without any distraction, but the distraction and lethargy have to arise, just like that. Not only it will be like so in the future, the immediate loss is not a big deal; there is another dreadful big issue [that will follow]!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 21.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P266, L9]***

**If you have made this a habit from the start, the virtuous practice of your whole lifetime will be flawed.**

Once you form this habit in the beginning, what is this habit? A nonvirtuous habit. Later, this nonvirtuous habit becomes difficult to change. Even if your aspiration is virtuous, your wish is excellent, yet the effect will not arise. Hence, a life is wasted in this way, and “the virtuous practice of your whole lifetime will be flawed.” It’s all wronged! Here, it just refers to one of our lifetimes. In fact, there is another life after this, and then another one. If you don’t improve it now the habit will continue life after life. We may have doubts about this concept; this condition can be pointed out now. Most of us who understand some scriptural teachings will know, what are the conditions for our current state in this life? The causes are from previous lives. Due to certain causes, certain effects are obtained in this life. The fruitional causes from previous lives produce the fruitional effects. The causally concordant causes from previous lives produce causally concordant effects in this lifetime [v.1 p.236].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 22.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P267, L3]***

Regarding this concept, I believe the majority of us may not quite understand it yet. What do these two [cause and effect] mean? The fruitional cause is where you have developed virtuous or nonvirtuous deeds that result in your being born as a human, deity, hell being, hungry ghost, or animal respectively in this life. A causally concordant cause is the condition where you are engaging the deed, and now the same condition arises within [us] again. If we never engaged in these deeds previously, we will not have taken the path as a monastic in this lifetime. Some say that a few hundred years ago, a few thousand years ago; everyone considered that renunciates were the best, so we also took the same path. Whereas in this society, now people think, “This is superstition, you are all muddled.” Yet you have stubbornly chosen to take this path. I believe without any specific cause we would not have done so, right! It is very obvious. Why did we take this path? There must be a cause and condition from previous lives.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 22.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P267, L3]***

However, it is interesting! The majority of us now are taking the path of reciting Buddha’s name. For this approach of reciting Buddha’s name, it is said that thousands have practiced it and thousands will be delivered [to Pure Land]. As long as you recite, it will happen. For us to encounter [this teaching] in this life, it did not just happen in this life, but it also happened in previous lifetimes. So, contemplate from this perspective – since it sounds so easy that thousands will be delivered if all chant Buddha’s name, although we have planted these causes, why are we still



here and not [in the Pure Land]? As a result, we engage busily in this life: some try for a year, some two years, some ten and even after 30 years there is still no sign of improvement. Isn't it obvious? This is what we should be more aware of! We lack understanding of the scriptures and we don't know the signs of application [subjective aspect] described in the scriptures, yet practice ambiguously with self-conceit. Once you truly understand, you will feel too anxious and find yourself intolerable. By then, you are on the right track. So now we often feel, "Oh well! I am still applying the teaching!" But as for what I can see now, one can only claim, "Good! Plant some virtuous roots. Very good! I can rejoice." However, whether this virtuous root is sprouting or manifesting, that is worthy of crying our hearts out! So, at this juncture, please remember this statement: "the virtuous deeds of an entire lifetime will be flawed." Then what should be done? It tells us...

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 24.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P268, L6]***

**Therefore, from the beginning, firmly determine the definite order and enumeration of whatever objects of meditation you wish to sustain.**

The first thing, regarding the content of your meditation, with your "objects of meditation," it is about the entire content instead of just a small portion. For now, maybe for our recitation of Buddha's name, it seems simple enough just to rely on "Amitabha Buddha." Yet it's not that simple! What are the actual session and supporting preparation? To have faith, aspiration, and deeds – faith in what, aspiring for what, we must identify all of these. Then, how to apply as a lay practitioner, as well as a monastic, "abiding the ethics and fulfilling duties." What ethics do you abide by at home,

and what duties does a monastic have? For reciting Buddha's name alone, these are the considerations! Needless to say, when entering the monastery as the monastic, from morning until night there are so many tasks we should learn. This is about the simple recitation of Buddha's name, but what about other practices? There is no exception. So, what is the content of "the objects of meditation"? "Enumeration" is the quality and quantity that encompasses the entire content. If the quality is wrong, then there is no point in talking about it. So "enumeration" actually can also be discussed in terms of "quality," meaning the content and essence must not be flawed. And then "quantity" has to be completely fulfilled. Is it enough with these two? No, "systematic order" is still required. Toward this, complete understanding beforehand is required to "determine the definitive order."

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 26.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P269, L3]***

For example, it should be simple when we cook rice! Cooking rice, of course, you say, "Well! Today, we are cooking rice so we need rice." You have to make sure not to mistaken wheat for rice, for that will not do! Even if it is rice, the un-hulled rice will not work, needless to say anything else. In Buddhism, there is a common saying of "cooking sand as rice." If the quality is wrong, no matter how big a pot of sand you are steaming, it is useless! So, the quality has to be accurate. Once it is right, then you cook it. Here [we have] 30 people, and if you cook only one bowl of rice, that's not enough! The quantity has to be right as well; either too little or too much is not good. Moreover, the systematic order is required, too. This has been mentioned many times before – the task needs to be defined first, it needs to be determined. To determine, it requires knowledge. It is not

like we hear it and understand it today, the assertion is lacking, definitely not with certain understanding! For when you actually practice, the crucial point is at application. So, you hear it now and you understand it, by the time you go back, your mental state is still muddled, that will not work! This main topic will be discussed later.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P99; 24A, 27.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P269, L12]***

So, what is “assertion?” It is when you sit down to recite Buddha’s name and nothing can sway you. I believe we all have this experience – if the environment is serene, it seems fine. However, when affliction arises, it becomes unstoppable. Why? The primary purpose of chanting Buddha’s name is to counteract the affliction, which is the root cause of cyclic existence and Buddha’s name leads to liberation. May [I] ask: if your chanting of Buddha’s name is not stopping affliction, is it working? If you are assured about the preceding teaching, by the time affliction arises, bring these to mind and immediately the affliction is vanquished. So, ancient scholars referred to this [chanting Buddha’s name] as the diamond sword of the Vajradhara, “Buddha comes, cut it off. Demons come, cut it off.” Why? That is the time for you to pick up [the assertion] and nothing can sway you. The so-called Buddha and demon, in a broader sense, you need to understand: favorable conditions cause you to have an attachment; so, don’t be influenced by them. The unfavorable conditions that arise will cause your anger – don’t be impacted. This is, “Buddha comes, cut it off. Demons come, cut it off.” By then, you will have the assertion, and you abide by it. Whatever comes will not influence you. Do it this way! Now, are we assured? So, you say you understood and are ready to apply! Please! Goodness Amitabha Buddha! Not quite there yet. What is

required? There needs to be the systematic order, as well as step-by-step advancement. Once these are asserted, there is more to it!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24A, 28.43, Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P270, L8]***

**Then, strengthen your will by repeatedly thinking, “I will not set up something that is different from what I have determined.”**

By the time there is clear and precise understanding then it is the time for application. Before it, what is required? The aspiration to “strengthen your will.” Why is this required? Often, when we encounter any tiny bit of adversity, we waver. With this strong will, under any circumstance, wavering will not happen, that is when you are engaged. So now we easily say that we need to go in depth into one entrance [of the teaching]. Is it truly in-depth into one entrance? That would be exactly what we want. As for our present state, generally there is this situation – spinning idly outside the entrance, unable to find the entrance, unable to find where the door is, and yet we are spinning with great excitement. This is one situation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P271, L1]***

Another kind is marching on the same spot, after marching for sometime, we think we are getting somewhere. In this situation, we are constantly spinning around by the external objects all day long and don't know it. You must know beforehand what it is like to spin around and what it is to not spin around. Then, at that time, even though you are determined, when the strong storm caused by external

objects comes upon you, you still can't stop it. Thus, one should aspire to make it happen: in any situation, definitely do not be influenced [by external condition]! That is it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 00.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P271, L5]***

Actually, it is not only the aforementioned section. We might look into *The Lesser Serenity and Insight* written by Venerable Zhi-zhe of the Tian-tai School [Han dynasty]. *The Lesser Serenity and Insight* is known as “*Tung-mung\**” *Serenity and Insight*, right! It is like the first step for a child. It also tells us: by then, you have truly made adequate preparations beforehand, and follow them with a strong aspiration to advance. Upon reading about the *Lesser Serenity and Insight*, this impression will definitely arise; there is no exception for those who have traversed this far. Great! Once you are determined, meditate on what “I have determined” – what was decided earlier: “I will not set up something that is different.” All other practices are left as is. Certainly, one should delve into the profound study. That is, you found the entrance and enter directly into the room. Whereas now, we are truly pathetic, pitifully turning around outside the entrance, yet we still feel: “Ah! I am engaging in an in-depth study.” To squander away one lifetime is minor when compared to circling around life after life.

[\*Tung-mung: refers to early childhood development.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 01.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P272, L3]***

I recalled one thing, many years ago, almost 20 years ago, when I was just ordained. There was one monk who told me, “Sigh! Now, after becoming a monastic, I can let everything go, except for one thing - the mouth!” At the time,

I heard this with the feeling that it seemed paradoxical and kind of disagreed. Twenty years later, ah! I feel that I have renounced everything in formality, yet nothing has been let go, especially the mouth! I am not sure if you feel this way? Why? Because one's purpose is unclear, this is the first reason. Next, even if the purpose is clear but the content is not, not knowing how to reach the goal. From that point on, later I noticed many good practitioners, well! One can claim to be intensely mindful of death, yet what about the essence [of one's practice]? It is totally unrelated to this claim of intensity. So I recalled my conversation from 20 some years ago with this fellow monk, now the feeling is truly very remorseful and painful. Hence, I am sharing this experience with everyone. If you are serious [about advancing on the path], by pointing out the fault and correcting it, that will be the right thing to do! So, of course! Definitely have to abide by the order, so what about the steps?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 3.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P272, L13]***

**Without exceeding or falling short of what you have determined, sustain your meditation with mindfulness and vigilance.**

At that time, sustain both without missing any part of it – what are they? These words “mindfulness” and “vigilance.” All meditation is incorporated within these words. One is the “mindfulness,” and the other is “vigilance” – this is the proper mindfulness and proper perception. So during the actual session, you can be very clear about what you are doing. If you are into chanting Buddha's name, in the moment of chanting it is clear and explicit. This is known as “mindfulness.” Besides, you are aware of your chanting and allow it to continue. Because you have this vigilance when

doing it right, you will let it continue, otherwise, you bring it back right away. This is known as mindfulness and vigilance. However, these two require much study, they will be discussed in great detail all the way till the meditative serenity section [v.3]. If we hear about it now and abide by it to practice, sorry to say, only if you have great virtuous roots the advancement will be very quick. Otherwise, upon hearing it and you try to figure it out, more fumbling leads to more mistakes. This is all the great masters' personal experience and there are no exceptions. This requires having a very clear understanding of each subjective aspect. And various preparations ahead of time are needed. By then, your mindfulness and vigilance become very clear and easy to uphold and attainment follows! "Sustain your meditation with mindfulness and vigilance," this kind of practice is proper and flawless. The text also includes "what you have determined," which is like what you have decided to do earlier, without exceeding or falling short. Whether you are falling short or exceeding, there is a lot to learn about it! Later, the text will reveal to us the reason.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 4.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P273, L12]***

Thus, this is the overall outline for applying the teaching, the entire framework. This is the outline, before understanding the specific details; we are not ready to talk about meditation. We may not be ready to talk about the narrower sense of meditation yet. However, the broader sense is what we are working on now. Our overall learning begins with listening to the teaching – from listening. Besides how to listen, there is also how to contemplate and how to apply the teaching. Take it step by step. Now, furthermore:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 5.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P274, L1]***

## **ii) How to sustain the meditation specifically**

Now, what are we meditating here? This is telling us how to cultivate faith toward a virtuous teacher. How do we practice it? It tells us:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 5.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P274, L4]***

**First reflect on the benefits of relying on the teacher, such as quickly attaining buddhahood, and the drawbacks of not relying on the teacher, such as giving rise to suffering in this and future lives.**

This will be explained one step at a time. Now that we have learned the method to apply the teaching, in other words, what is our object of meditation now: that is, how to rely on a virtuous teacher to initiate the faith and how to have no fluctuation so on and so forth. The author tells us this approach: first contemplate the laudable benefit of relying on virtuous teacher – this laudable benefit, he provides one example, which is achieving Buddhahood quickly. If you are able to think about it and quickly grasp it that is great! Otherwise, switch to another approach, always look for the one that you can accord with, what is the main purpose of this? If you are able to accord with the concept, there will be a strong force that arises to trigger you seeking for it one-pointedly. Although we may not have this feeling in studying Buddha Dharma, however, each one of us has this ability, and this ability is very strong. All you have to do is slightly adjust the direction of this ability and the pursuit of Buddha Dharma will be successful right away.



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 7.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P274, L13]***

What is this ability? It is your propensity in seeking for favorable objects. For instance, now we hear that a certain place has a great Dharma Master: “Ah, this Dharma Master is great!” Or this place has a great seven-day retreat, or how great is this certain object. You will start to think, “Wow, I have to go after it wholeheartedly!” I believe we all have this kind of experience! When going to school wow, America is great, so everyone wants to go there to study. Later, when [we] are more matured, the attraction with the opposite gender even will appear in the dream. I believe we all have this experience! Definitely possible! Why? For each of the above has its specific benefit. Doesn't everyone have this potential? Right! The pity is that it is mistakenly applied. Now all you have to do is invert it. The way we are told to invert is through contemplation, and this concept will be covered in detail later. So here I am telling you the principle. Once you know this approach and follow it, achievement is certain. Up to now, most of you here may not know about this approach. Thus, even though you have tried to apply, yet the effect is not there. We should not rush into it; just deepen it step by step.

This is the force that pulls you forward. Even if it were powerful enough, the force pushing from behind is still required. Sometimes we will fall backwards. The author tells you the faults of not relying on a virtuous teacher, and that will lead to present and future great sufferings. Wow! With this thought of yours, you will not refrain from relying [on virtuous teacher]. Hence, with the pushing force behind and the pulling force in front, how can achievement be impossible? It is definitely possible! For the same reason, even if we don't have this experience in studying Buddha

Dharma, this mental force of ours is definitely available! For instance, if you were told to ingest this cup of deadly poison, of course we won't take it. Or there is a kind of poison that blowing in the wind and will poison you. You can hardly wait to escape. This has to be the reaction, right? When you were told to come here [toward the poison], "Well, no way!" This is the pushing force from behind. When you contemplate the great harm of relying on a nonvirtuous teacher, you will want to hide from him when you see him. So [the advancement] becomes very easy.

So remember! Here the most important thing is these two tasks: what is a nonvirtuous teacher like? He is one who lacks faith. Well, if he does not have faith and this faith is not of the ordinary kind. What is a virtuous teacher? It is one who can help purify you, and this is also our purpose for practice. So with the pulling force in front and the pushing force behind, the strength is there. So what do you cultivate during the actual session? Like this:

**Then, think, many times and with an attitude of restraint,**

Restraint is to stop past wrongdoings. What was wrong with them? That is, [we] always focus on finding others' faults. Now, this attitude should be done away with!

**"I will never allow myself to conceive of faults in my guru."**

As for conceiving of the Guru's faults, one should never have this attitude within. If it arises, one must remove it. This is why we have to pay constant attention! Why do the Bodhisattva vows specifically remind us to "speak of the faults of the four types of followers" and why should "self-commending and slandering others" definitely be avoided!

What are the four types of followers? Monks, Nuns, novice Monks, and novice Nuns. They are part of the Three Jewels and they represent the pure insignia. If you criticize [their] faults, well, right on the spot, it is actually harming us. However now we always, well, sit down and chat nothing but these topics [of fault finding]. Ah, it is wrong! Now, if you can avoid all of these, naturally it will be easier for you to avoid [to find faults] with the virtuous teachers.

There are already many skillful means mentioned earlier. Actually, in theory, we also know that our study of Mahayana Buddha Dharma is to liberate all living beings. You are even inspired to liberate the villains who commit the ten nonvirtuous deeds, needless to say, the monastics who represent the pure insignia. If he abides by the teaching properly, you need to learn from him right away. If he does not abide by them, then you strive earnestly to help him, this is the right attitude! Because you want to properly help him, you feel that you are insufficient within – if you lack compassion then hurry up learn to apply it. If you lack wisdom, speed up to study it. This is what we should do. There will not be anything like sitting down and chatting about others' shortcomings. This should not be the attitude toward an average being, needless to say about your Guru. Regardless of which approach you are contemplating, in fact, it is very easy to gradually and gradually remove this attitude. Next,

**After considering any of your guru's good qualities that you know—such as ethical discipline, concentration, wisdom, and being learned—**

Once the slandering attitude is restrained, the merit will increase. That is, try your best to focus on his good qualities – constantly contemplate on them. This method was

mentioned before: as long as you are inspired by [the teacher's] virtue and contemplate [the teacher's] merits, even if there is a slight fault, it will not prevent you [from respecting the Guru]. It is like parents who always think that their children are loveable. Maybe we have not been parents before, but when we look at ourselves, we are always the best, just like that. Why? Because it is the way it should be! If you are able to feel the merit and virtue of a given object, you won't be able to see the faults. Now, this is what we should practice. So this learning should be up to what degree? The text continues:

**meditate on them until you produce a faith that has the aspect of mental clarity.**

You should continue to meditate on them, until when? Until your “faith” in your mind has reached mental clarity, and that will do. Furthermore, once this purified clarity arises, at all time you will feel, “Wow! The virtuous teacher is great, [I] should rely on the virtuous teacher for everything!” You will spontaneously rely on him wholeheartedly and receive all the benefits from him. In fact, such a notion itself is immeasurable merit. As for this, it will be gradually discussed later. The key here is: meditate until when? Meditate until [you] get to this level.

**Then, in accordance with the sutras cited earlier, contemplate how your guru's kindness has been and will be helpful to you. Meditate on that until you develop respect from the depths of your heart.**

Is it enough to generate this mental clarity? It is not sufficient! [You] still have to do what was mentioned earlier, to mindfully appreciate his kindness – the kindness this teacher has shown me in the past and the kindness he is

showing me now. The kindness already given, of course, is necessary, whereas the kindness at the present moment is, in fact, important as well. Due to the past kindness, you will rely on him wholeheartedly. Because you still need more, you definitely don't want to forsake him. What has his kindness been in the past? Today we have the opportunity to be here that is completely reliant on the virtuous teacher. Without the virtuous teacher, this is absolutely not possible because we might still be in the midst of miserable realms. So what is the kindness at the present moment? Don't you aspire to become a Buddha? All goodness we need will depend on him without an exception. If you are able to contemplate it in this way, then the rest of it will fall into place!

Let's think about it: if this kind of mentality is properly developed, will you have any negative thoughts in your mind? Not one negative thought can be found! Isn't this clear and explicit! Now, from the Bodhisattva vows we say, "Alas! Not to slander the faults of the four followers and not to self-praise and denigrate others is way too hard." Once you comprehend the reasoning, making it happen is very easy. You can't help [but to stop negative thoughts]. As long as you properly abide by Bodhisattva vows, how can you not be reborn in Pure Land? Both monastic vows and the one-day-eight-precepts lead to Pure Land rebirth, needless to mention the Bodhisattva vows. How can this rebirth not take place? Isn't this very clear! Hence, the ancient practitioners referred to the Dharma category of 10,000 practitioners practicing and all of them achieving [rebirth in Pure Land]. This is definitely true they are not deceiving us. However, we are circling around with the exact words like a farce, what good is that? So here the author tells us, once you have this [pure virtuous intention], both veneration and

respect will arise. Great, this is about the actual session. Next, what follows?

### **c) What to do at the conclusion**

The above is the narrower definition of meditation. The broader definition covers all periods; that is, meditation continues [after the actual session]. The narrower sense is where I am sitting here [in the meditation posture]. In our case, it is the morning and evening sessions or, after these two sessions, you have a set of time for prostration and meditation. So what about the remaining time: after my prostration and after the morning and evening sessions – when eating, walking, talking, or even sleeping, etc., what should we do? So the text tells us here, “by means of such...” Oh! We are not at that section yet, this is at the [conclusion] after the actual session\*. The next part is, “what to do in between meditation sessions.” After the actual meditation session,

[\*Please refer to the outline on v.1 p.93, the sequence of the text is arranged as conclusion follows actual meditation session and before what to do in between meditation sessions.]

**By means of such prayers as the *Prayer of Samantabhadra and Aspiration in Seventy Verses (Pranidhana-saptati)*, dedicate the virtue that you have accumulated. Do it with an aspiration so strong that it will be the cause of fulfilling your provisional and final aims.**

This has been covered earlier, so [we] will not go into detail here. In short, as long as you properly abide by what was mentioned earlier, the benefit is immeasurable. That is when dedication is required – dedicate “with a strong

aspiration,” a very strong aspiration for virtue. Some of you here have not heard of this, so try to properly review the previous recorded teachings. Then you will know what the subjective aspects of “strong” and “aspiration” are, what the condition of “aspiration” is, and how to dedicate. It will all become very clear and explicit. Of course, you can follow the *Prayer of Samantabhadra’s Ten Great Aspirations* and the *Aspiration in Seventy Verses*, etc. What do you dedicate to? To the present as well as the ultimate – the present is the immediate high status, and the ultimate is the final certain goodness. In other words, from our state of ordinary beings’ stepwise advancement, it is all included. As for the sequential order, the present dedication for path-of-accumulation is such, for path-of-preparation is such, path-of-seeing and path-of-meditation should be such, one after another, so on and so forth. This is the present process of attaining high status. The final certain goodness is the enlightened physical form and the enlightened mind. Dedicate to these.

**Meditate in this way during four sessions: predawn, morning, afternoon and at nightfall.**

This is the Indian tradition. Our practice is four sessions every day. One sits there to meditate and, as far as I know, [in India] they actually practiced properly and slept for four hours at night. Out of the six periods\*, this was the time to sleep. In the morning, usually they would get up around 2 for the first session. This session of theirs was pretty long, about three hours or more. This was followed by breakfast, and the next session was usually three to four hours as well. So, there was one session before noon, one session afterward, and one in the evening. The night was for sleeping, and there were a total of four sessions each day.

The next statement is: how should a beginner start meditation?

[\*Six periods of a day: morning, midmorning, afternoon, evening, midnight, early morning.]

**Furthermore, if at first you meditate for a long time, you will be readily susceptible to laxity and excitement.**

[We] should know, as a beginner, if you sit for too long, one becomes easily susceptible to “laxity and excitement.” “Susceptible” means you are in the midst of it yet are unaware. What is “excitement”? What is “laxity”? These will not be discussed in detail here; they are covered very clearly in the meditative serenity section [v.3 chapter 1~6]. To those fellow practitioners who have experience, once I point it out, you will know it right away. The reasons that we are not able to attain meditative stabilization or achieve one-pointedness, there are several conditions: one is the distraction, thinking wildly of all kinds of things. This is not referring to the average distraction, but it is specifically about “excitement.” What is “excitement”? It is the mind state that accords with outward covetousness: thinking of this and that, yearning for this or that. This is the condition of mental excitement. Moreover, after you think, think, think and become tired, laxity will take place. What is laxity? First, it is the subtle dizziness that then turns into coarse drowsiness, and then even fall into sleep.

Let’s think about what is our normal state? Just like the above. One might still say, “Wow! I can fold my legs in the lotus position! For one hour!” Sure! The legs can endure the excruciating pain, but what is happening in your mind? It is either lax or excited, either wandering around or dozing off. Not like that. Dozing off is too far off from subtle laxity. For those of you who aspire to study earnestly, definitely don’t



rush into it. By the time we study meditative serenity, the characteristics will be described in great detail – any tiny bit of mental action is described very clearly to you. Once you recognize them, then the advancement is definitely very steady. I will not discuss it further here. Upon your formation of this habit, then

**If this becomes your habit, it will be difficult to correct your awareness.**

Once the habit is formed, it will be very hard for you to change, too hard. In the end, the effect will be “the virtuous practice of whole lifetime will be flawed.” And one will be trapped in this [habit] life after life. It is that serious! Hence, I remembered something from over ten years ago. At that time, I was crude and impetuous, bustling around. Back then, because I read about this Lamrim and had other virtuous teachers’ instructions, I recognized that being secluded in a retreat was not useful, that staying in a thatched hut wouldn’t work. The Zen lineage clearly states, “If you cannot break through the basic stage, one should not retreat to the mountains.” One has to have a perceived understanding before going for a retreat in the mountains. If you don’t have the prerequisite to go for a retreat in the mountains, it won’t work. At that time, I already recognized this. For us now, sigh, can’t even dream about what a “basic breakthrough” is, yet we say that we want to go for a retreat in the mountains. It is of no use! Thus, back then, I was running around to visit places, well! Later, I met a teacher at that time who I considered to be pretty good and I followed him. Wow! It was great, and he also accepted me. The two of us were locked up in a retreat location that was borrowed from someone else, and we began meditating.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93; 24B, 22.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P282, L14]***

Then he told also me about the rules of the Zen meditation center. What to do in the morning, how did the Lin-ji Zen sect hang the board, how did the Tso-don Zen sect hang it, so on and so forth. Moreover, upon arriving at the meditation center, [he showed me] how to strike the board, strike it how many times, and how to do it. I listened with great enthusiasm, ah! The [monastic] discipline is so wonderful. And then when we went for the seated session, it turned out that once we sat down, well! Definitely, within three minutes, I took a glance and he had dozed off. At that time, I had more or less visited several places in the community and was somewhat aware of meditation approaches so it was a good session. I began with my own mindful meditation, because I wanted to learn from him, so I would pay attention to how he did it. Something was not right, what was going on? He probably noticed it as well. So during that session, he was sitting there and, toward the end, drooling all over. He had fallen asleep. After we got up, he felt pretty good about it, “Ah! This was a very good sitting.”

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93; 24B, 23.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P283, L8]***

Thus, during the meal, we chatted. He must have noticed that something was not right and told me, “Well, when I got up in the morning, there was some drowsiness.” I thought that must have been the case. At that time, even in my mind, I had started to fluctuate yet... I don't know how to describe it. During the meal, he told me: “Well, there is some dizziness.” I thought that must be right, it should be better after the meal. After the meal, well, the same thing happened again. After the session, he said, “It is easier to

fall asleep after a meal.” Sure, it is so! Yet, after that sitting, upon washing his face and the like, I thought, this next session should be better, right. Well! The result was the same. For a total of six incenses’ sittings, there was not an exception, just like that. So [he] ended up sleeping away two days and we went back! I was having doubts, was [meditation] supposed to be this way?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P93; 24B, 24.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P283, L15]***

At that time, I had already read [about meditation on my own], but it was a pity not to have the chance to learn from others. So I was not too sure about the crucial points. It was not until I experienced, sigh, too many hard times! I read this Lamrim from cover to cover many times. The first time through, I totally didn’t understand it, but I liked it very much. That was about 23 years ago, I can’t remember, could have been either 23 or 22 years. Although I didn’t know enough to like it, I still clenched my teeth to read through it. Later, I read it over and over, ah! I liked it more and more after each reading. However, I just couldn’t identify the key points. Later, I tried to study on my own and had a taste of it, then read it again, wow! That was when it dawned on me. What is the author telling us here? Once you have formed the negative habit, it is impossible to change. The above Zen teacher was not aware of it! Even if he knew about it, nothing could be done. Although we don’t have the decades of experience like that elder teacher [above], however, for those of us sitting here, we all have had this experience before: can you uphold the chanting of Buddha’s name? At that juncture, you might have wandering thoughts and you just can’t do anything about it. Or you will doze off and you can’t do anything about it, either. Hence, once the negative

habit is formed, “it will be difficult to correct your awareness.” Ah! So what should you do?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 26.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P284, L12]***

**Therefore, meditate in many short sessions.**

Don't sit for too long, there is great reasoning to this! For the actual session, later I met a virtuous teacher who told us to keep it four to five minutes. The author already mentioned the reasoning earlier. Now we did not even understand it, and to try it without understanding is of no use. Once you were told that - back in the ancient times this was the way it should be [begin with many short sessions]. Now, this is revealed to you here and, after you try it, this is the crucial point! So, for us now, hearing it without registering, it is of no use. Once you hear it, you should constantly contemplate on what the intended meaning is, and then practice it! By then, your mind will begin to feel like it is hard to make sense of things, which will be the time when one has more or less had some imprint on it. The meditation teacher will ask about your state, you need to let him know. For a serious learner, you should ask him before he comes to you. Let him know your meditation state, he can sense right from wrong and give you guidance. Moreover, you will be told to dwell on it for a few minutes. By then, you will be very clear, well, how “excitement” takes place and how “laxity” arises. So, in the beginning of our practice, the teacher will tell you to sit for five minutes. When five minutes is up, you take a break for 15-minutes. By then, he will gradually increase the duration in accordance with your improvement. So here is the quote:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 27.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P285, L10]***

**If you end your session while still wanting to meditate, you will be eager to reenter each future session. Otherwise, it is said that you will feel nauseous when you see the cushion.**

I will explain the content first instead of the words, and then you read them on your own to understand it. It is saying that, once you obtain proper guidance, the subjective aspect of your session will become very clear. Well, you know what to do. Moreover, because the subjective aspects are clear, you will engage in it with joy. This applies to whatever we do. You follow his instruction and you are joyful, is this right? Furthermore, in the beginning, well, you try and try yet can't find the trick to it. Later, you got it, wow! How joyful! At that time, you will happily think, "Ah, this is right, [I] got it right!" For instance, when you chant Buddha's name, usually you will have wandering thoughts. By then, once uphold the chanting of the Buddha's name, wow, you feel so happy! For those practitioners who have seriously made effort, they have certainly had this experience. Or if you prostrate to Buddha often with wandering thoughts, by then your prostration will be very peaceful. Ah, that feeling will be spontaneous gratitude and joy. Sometimes during prostration, unknowingly, one will cry one's heart out. Although one is crying, there is joy within. This applies to anything [chanting Buddha's name or prostration].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 24B, 28.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 3, P286, L8]***

When we encounter this [joyful meditation] state, well, that is great just continue with it. Yet the proper instruction is

not so! Once you experience this joy, you will feel, “Wow, it is right this time! I want to continue.” This is known as “wanting to meditate.” Well, it is interesting! Under such conditions, we will continue, but what is the author telling us? [He advised us] to take a break. So, let’s think about it, why do we need to pause when the right conditions arise? This is the skillfulness of the virtuous teacher, how wonderful! You are stopped when you have it right, what is the condition of stopping? Once you get up from the seat and think, “How wonderful!” Although you are off the seat, your mind is constantly eager to go back to it. Do you believe it?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 00.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P3, L1]***

Perhaps we don’t have this experience. Let me tell you this then, say you went to the kitchen today and you were asked to taste the most delicious food, maybe something you have never tried before. This person persuaded you, you were not interested in trying it, but finally, you think that you might as well give it a try, so you went into the kitchen and tried it. How tasty! If you were told to stop eating it, sorry, come back for more tomorrow! Upon leaving, you would think about it day and night: alas, have to wait until tomorrow can hardly wait. It would be nice to have it for lunch today! I believe we all have had this kind of experience! The method is so skillful and superb, well, just like that! This is also my personal experience: I mentioned to you before about my experience in reciting Buddha’s name 20 some years ago, yet it stopped appearing after the second night [of chanting]. Well? Why was last night so smooth, and why didn’t the same feeling arise tonight? No matter how [I] searched, it was not there.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 01.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P3, L8]***

After several years had passed, I began to understand this principle. That was the time when I was at another location, also in a retreat by myself there. That was the period of time when I had once benefited [from the seated meditation] and then the feeling would disappear. Ah, so here was the problem! That time, I was sitting as usual. After a few minutes, the object of meditation arose, ah, how nice! All of a sudden, the thought crossed my mind: Well, the virtuous teacher told me to end the session immediately. At that time, I applied the greatest determination and exited the meditation posture. Then, I noticed: how wonderful! Even though I ended the session, in my mind: well, why does time pass so slowly, I need to get back to the second session again! So, regardless of what I engaged in, that mindfulness was there and I could feel it pulling me. Later, further verification confirmed this as well, as long as you experience the benefit then, once you stop, it will be there to pull you back.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 01.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P4, L6]***

Are we like that now? No. We can't even figure out [the essence of it]. Even if you have figured it out, hanging on to it is also very tough. By holding on strenuously for a long time, what do we end up with? The feeling [of meditation] is not there. Alas, sit there the legs hurt and the back is sore. So, in the end, before you see the cushion again, you feel nauseous! You were told [to sit for meditation], and you think, well, maybe I can do it later! So when we truly engage in it, with this understanding, you would hardly be able to wait, can't wait to have [the next meditation session]. If you

cannot get a good grip on this, then you would wish to delay the session, and that's why we seem to be dragging our feet. If you have tasted the essence of the morning and evening sessions, and you were told to be there at 7:00, you would want to be there early at 6:55 to get ready in the seated position. "If others don't want to do it, I will." Here is the key issue! So, on the board I specifically wrote, for now, let meditation be your friend. Don't let meditation become your enemy. That's how we are now – we have made meditation our enemy – that is really pitiful! So, next, what happens?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 3.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P5L1]***

**When your meditation has become somewhat stable, lengthen the session. In all the sessions make your practice free from the faults of being either too strict or excessively relaxed, and thereby sustain your meditation. In this way you will have few obstacles and will overcome problems such as overtiredness, laxity, and lethargy.**

First, you have to figure out the right way, and then it needs to be somewhat stable. What is "somewhat stable?" I need to clarify this. For example, whether it is reciting Buddha's name or seated meditation, it's like a blind cat catching a blind mouse [or blind squirrel sometimes find acorn], it could happen! It could happen all of a sudden, but this doesn't count. One day it's there, but the next day it isn't. Once you truly have it, it is not like that. Now you have it, and tomorrow it is still there. But that is not stable – sometimes it's pretty good, sometimes it arises with little effort, but other times you try for half a day and nothing happens. After you truly have it right, you engage in it and, right away, the object of meditation will arise, just like that.



This is the sign of steady engagement. But is it stable? Not yet. What is stable? It is where not only can you engage in it immediately, but also there is no external condition to distract you. They will not distract you, that is the sign of stability. That's how it is! By then, you can extend the duration of the meditation, that is when you can lengthen it and this is not about torturing your legs.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 04.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P5, L10]***

So, nowadays, many practice “continuous seated meditation.” Alas, I just feel sorry for them. But there is no way to advice them, don't know how to help. For those of you sitting here, perhaps some already have faith in what I have said because the earlier teachings already have pretty much covered it. Regardless of whether you are listening or reading on your own to complete the study of meditative serenity and wisdom insight [v.3], even if I tell you not to abide by it, you would not be able to stop. You will be very lucid and clear about what is generation and what is stabilization, very clear about each sign of practice. Enter into each step with the proper order. At that time, extending the duration of meditation would be appropriate!

[\*Continuous seated meditation: constantly sitting in meditation without lying down between sessions]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 05.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P6, L1]***

Moreover, next is a major principle – “in all the sessions,” under any circumstance, do not rush; rushing is not permitted. Slow down – being too slow is not permitted, either. These reflect the flaws at the time of preparation. If

you are able to abide by it, “you will have few obstacles.” Among the obstacles, the primary one is excitement. Then there is lethargy and exhaustion, etc. Once they are all eliminated, under this circumstance, during your meditation session, ah! Naturally favorable conditions arise, and of course, the experience is positive. So, listening to the teachings up to now, I believe everyone can trust me: to achieve meditative stabilization is not difficult, it truly isn’t hard! As long as you receive the complete instruction, even though I have mentioned those practitioners [who have attainment] around me, and you also have faith in me. After all, this is to believe in others’ attainment. As long as you are willing to practice the entire content accordingly, every one of us can easily have the achievement. Today’s teaching is up to here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 06.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P6, L8]***

From the above, we discussed meditation. What is meditation, and what should be done after the conclusion? Today, the topic is “what to do in between meditation sessions.” During the actual session, if we practice according to the standard, there are only four actual sessions. So for us now, our actual session – the total of morning and evening sessions are no more than two hours, whereas you have 24 hours in a day – other than these two hours, the remaining 22 hours [may] be engaged in nonvirtuous deeds. So for the two hours of virtuous karma, can it withstand 22 hours of nonvirtuous deeds? This is why we tried for a long time, but unable [to achieve] it! Now the author tells us, well, other than the actual session, what should be done in between sessions. If you can grasp this concept, very well, all 24 hours are spent applying the teachings.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 07.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P6, L14]***

So, often when we speak of both the actual session and supportive meditation, for both of them, it seems like this “supportive” is a token, just a gesture. This is incorrect, wrong! We must realize that this supportive meditation is as important as the actual session. In many situations, this supportive one is more important than the actual session! For example, when we speak of preparation, it may not seem like the actual session, but rather like a foundation. In fact, without the previous foundation, your entire actual session would be totally useless. We often come up with all sorts of examples, such as cooking – if you didn’t wash the vegetables ahead of time, may [I] ask, are you able to eat it after cooking? If the foundation of your house is not properly established, can you expand it and live in it? Without a solid foundation, if you move in, when a small typhoon hits, it would fall on you. This concept is very clear. The sutras stated this in so many examples; this is a fundamental concept for us to know.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 08.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P7, L6]***

Here, it tells us, regardless of whether it is the actual or in between sessions, not only should we pay attention to the appearing sign - if we lack this understanding and we are likely to be stuck on the appearing sign - then it would be our greatest loss. Now, let’s take a look at the text.

**2) What to do in between meditation sessions**  
**In general there are many things to be done between meditation sessions, such as obeisance, circumambulation, and recitation [of prayers and**

**scripture]. However, the principal thing to do in this context is as follows.**

**After you have made an effort to meditate in the actual session and are at the point of ending the session, you might not continue to rely on mindfulness and vigilance, and might instead completely let go of what should be sustained—the object of meditation and its subjective aspects. If you do so, your progress will be extremely small.**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 08.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P7, L9]***

To sum up, between the two meditation sessions - this is between the previous and the next sessions. In other words, when we end the meditation, for instance, other than the morning and evening sessions or when you are working on your own study, during all other times, of course, you can still arrange your individual schedule. Here, it lists obeisance, circumambulation, and reading texts, and many more. So later the text will tell us what is the most important. First, it tells us the principle of the actual session. Certainly, during the actual session, one must strive at it. Once it has ended, “after you have made an effort to meditate,” get off the meditation seat and before the next session, during that time, if you do not pay attention to it, [thinking,] “alas, after all this hard work, just take a break, chat for awhile, have some fun, then come back.” This is the time you would lose “the object of meditation and its subjective aspects.” This will not work.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 10.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P8, L6]***

What should be done? One should maintain mindfulness and vigilance, and not become too relaxed. So the text says, if you do “not continue to rely on mindfulness and vigilance” – this “rely” is to be mindful and vigilant – in other words, it is still about mindfulness and vigilance. If you don’t maintain them and let them become relaxed, thus the generation of true benefit is very minimal, very small! So when a true practitioner has this kind of practice, he applies full attention to meditation and even continues with the practice after the session. However, what is the difference between the two? We should know: when you are meditating attentively, focusing with full energy, we definitely need to properly accommodate both tension and relaxation. Thus, when you are done with one session, you need to adjust physically and mentally, but do not completely slack off.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P100; 25A, 11.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P8, L12]***

The difference between relaxing and slacking requires clarification here: for instance, I am going to prostrate or recite Buddha’s name now, so I devote full attention to it. Here in the prayer hall, stand there with full attention. At that time, with full attention and standing tall, then the eyes are open wide to focus on the chanting, well, after chanting for half an hour, you feel tired! Then, at that time, we should take a break for some relaxation. To relax, relax what? Relax this physical form – the body needs some relaxation. Yet you should not forget the mindfulness of your object of meditation, this is very important! You can go there and lie in bed, and be relaxed in this manner. The body is relaxing but your mind still concords with the object of meditation, still concords with it. This is very important, very important!

You can even recall the flaws of previous session or any mistakes, and how to improve in the next session, like that.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 12.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P9, L5]***

**Therefore, even in between sessions, look at teachings that reveal the meaning of your object of meditation, and recollect it again and again. Accumulate, by many means, the collections, which are favorable conditions for producing good qualities. Also, clear away, by many means, the obscurations, which are unfavorable conditions.**

So what should be done in between sessions? Well, we should read “teachings that reveal the meaning of your object of meditation,” sutras and commentaries that explain how to apply your object of meditation. Of course, that includes the instructions from virtuous teachers, your own notes, or the like. So why does it say, “reveal?” Because in many applications of the teachings, they do not go over the perceptions, for example, in the teaching of visualization or how to visualize, there is not much to be said. Also with recitation of mantras, for example, especially in Vajrayana, it talks about concordance with samaya [Vajrayana precepts]. As long as you abide by it, then it should be right. As for how to apply and why you should apply, many concepts sometimes will not be revealed and, gradually when the time is right, you will automatically conform to it. However, the teacher will definitely explain the points that concern you ahead of time, he will have a complete explanation. So, with this type of sutras or commentaries, you should continuously read and reflect on them, just like that. This kind of task is nothing but what? It is nothing but accumulating favorable conditions and clearing away

unfavorable ones. Therefore, it says, “accumulate, by many means, the collections, which are favorable conditions for producing good qualities.” By the same token, “clear away, by many means, the obscurations.” “By many means” is all kind of approaches. That is, whichever conforms to you, whichever is accurate, you just abide by it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 13.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P10, L3]***

**By applying what you know, strive at whatever vow you have promised to observe, as this is the basis of everything.**

Within this process, what is the most important “basis?” This we should know. The basis is the “vows” we observe. This vow is the ethical discipline we have taken – one needs to strive to observe it, strive to uphold it. The vow described here, we need to know that it doesn’t just mean that I have shaved my head and possess the [monastic] appearance. Once you have truly accepted the vows, there is the invisible moral essence of ethical discipline, just like that. This essence of ethical discipline will naturally and spontaneously arise to prevent wrongdoings and stop nonvirtue. This essence should not be ruined. By proper observation, then even while you are sleeping, it is still accumulating merit and the accumulation is consistently multiplying. Once [the essence of precepts] is damaged, this [moral essence of ethical discipline] disappears. This is the reason why meditative concentration and wisdom have to be established on the basis of ethical discipline.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 14.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P10, L10]***

So we will not go into too much detail here, the actual concept is very important, truly important! This we will discuss at another time when we discuss ethical discipline. Especially since I have talked to you about discussing the *Nan-shan Discipline* in the future – the key importance is about this [moral essence of ethical discipline]. By that time, you will experience a totally different situation. If you have already got [the experience], then you need to treasure it sincerely. If not, strive at it and sincerely work on it. But for now, this is for us to know – never purposefully break it! So within all these [concepts], the key is still the correct view.

**In addition, follow the instruction called “Consolidation” with regard to (1) training the mind in the object of meditation and its subjective aspects, (2) observing vows (3) accumulating the collections.**

So some have summarized their meditation – take the object of meditation and subjective aspect to purify the mind. With this, we know that we often engage in contaminated deeds that conform to ignorance. Now, apply this conformity to purify [our mental streams]. The condition, in the beginning, may not be sufficient, thus we have to accumulate merits and eliminate obscuration. Then what is the foundation? The foundation is the “vows.” Thus, all three are combined as the first step for us beginners, just like that.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 16.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P11, L7]***

Well, now we have a basic understanding here. Thus, for meditation, it includes two parts: one is preparatory and the other is the supportive part after the conclusion. The other is the actual meditation session. So the duration covers all 24 hours, and the tasks involve are our various



activities. From the moment you open your eyes in the morning until the next morning when you get up, everything is included. When you are sleeping, you can practice meditation, and the same for meals, just like that. We should understand this concept not just literally. By then, you will know it clearly in your mind.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 17.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P11, L12]***

If you are not clear, please reflect on what we have discussed last night, you must spend more effort on it. Last night, there was one fellow practitioner who asked, “Well, your definition of the spirit of enlightenment is not clarified yet, why is that?” Because, until now, from the perspective of studying this treatise, the actual content of spirit of enlightenment is not covered yet, only the very beginning of it – I only made use of the beginning portion. Therefore, [Lamrim] has mentioned in the beginning that we should first recognize that we are sick [with 3 mental poisons]. If you don’t even know that you are sick, what more can be discussed? If you think that you are right, are very proud of it, and feel good about it, then it is no help [to continue the learning].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 17.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P12, L4]***

When I was first ordained, I met all kinds of teachers. One of them would often tell me this – on one hand, of course, he was talking about himself, but, on the other hand, it was a lesson for me too. I still remember it vividly. Ah, he said, “My problem is that I like to teach others, I like to be others’ teacher!” I now have more and more feelings about this statement, well! How true, very accurate! Like that. It is

very obvious that our problem is this “like to be others’ teacher.” We don’t even know what we have to teach, don’t even know how to be a student and want to teach others. This is a great flaw. So the sutras taught us: those who have not disciplined themselves have no basis for disciplining others [v.1 p.71]. I just wanted to mention this here. Moreover,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 18.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P12, L10]***

**Furthermore, learn the four preconditions,**

So next it tells us that when we are accumulating merits, there are four things we need to do. These are the four:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 18.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P12, L12]***

**which are causes that readily produce the paths of serenity and insight:**

This is saying that all our merits of the mundane and supramundane worlds arise from meditative concentration and wisdom. This meditative concentration refers to serenity (samatha), and wisdom is insight (vipassana). So when we are meditating now, it is to train on the causes for these two subjects. Thus, next it will show us these four – well, the proper causes. In other words, it is the first step that we should take. Once you apply the cause properly, then the future effect will be accurate, perfect, and flawless.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 19.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P13, L4]***

**(a) restraining the sensory faculties, (b) acting vigilantly, (c) appropriate diet, and (d) striving to practice without sleeping at the wrong time, and acting properly at the time of sleep.**

It is divided into four parts. The first is to closely guard and restrain our six sensory faculties. And upon whatever we engage in, we should accurately recognize what we are working on – act with vigilance, which is the second one. Next, it specifically talks about “appropriate diet.” That is, one should know how much to eat. Also, when we sleep, how to strive on the continuous application of the teaching. Actually, if the first two have been properly applied, then it should be correct. However, during our daily routines, the biggest loopholes are eating and sleeping. So eating and sleeping is explained specifically. Once you truly understand this, then the recognition of applying the teaching definitely can happen within all 24 hours.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 20.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P13, L11]***

With regard to these four preconditions, I will just briefly go over them. Until we study the meditative serenity section later, and that will be the time when we come to review these four preconditions. By then, you will feel: ah, how fascinating! For true meditation, the key points are contained in these four. If you can attain certainty on these four, success will definitely arise. Needless to say, the recitation of Buddha’s names can be achieved and so will practice Zen meditation, just like that! Now, let us go over them one by one.

**a) Restraining the sensory faculties**  
**There are five parts to this section,**

The first one is to restrain the sensory faculties.

[\*Please refer to chapter 5 outline page 2 for these 5 parts]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 21.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P14, L4]***

**the first of which is *that with which you restrain* the sensory faculties.**

This is the first one. There is small words comment next to it.

[Note: the small words referred here is in Chinese text.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 21.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P14, L6]***

**You restrain them with a constant maintenance of your mindfulness and a continuous persistence at mindfulness.**

The smaller word [in Chinese text] was included in this edition. In many cases, this kind of explanation helps clarify our understanding. It says while we are restraining the faculties – the six sensory faculties – what do we use to restrain it? It says “with a constant maintenance of your mindfulness and a continuous persistence at mindfulness.” This is followed by a clarification.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 22.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P14, L10]***

**With respect to these two, the first, maintaining your mindfulness, means that you practice your mindfulness repeatedly without forgetting the teachings about**

## **restraining the sensory faculties as well as the other three preconditions.**

What we need to restrain are the six sensory faculties. Then what do you use to restrain it? Restrain with the Dharma jewel in your six sensory faculties – apply this Dharma treasure to constantly train so as to not to forget about it, do not ignore it. Actually, for true meditation, this is it. That is to say, it is the most effective treasure, your tool, and your weapon to restrain against the three mental poisons. If you lose this weapon, how do you restrain? This is the first part. Why do we need to “repeatedly” practice? For you to become familiar with using this weapon, you need to be skillful and know how to get it to work, which requires continuous familiarization. Once you are familiar with it, then at any time or any place, well, when this enemy [affliction] arises, you can take out the weapon to fight against it immediately.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 23.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P15, L4]***

So this is what we use, use the Dharma jewel of our six sensory faculties to restrain. Become familiar with this Dharma jewel, then it will not be forgotten. Otherwise, it would be just like our present state. We may say, “Alas, [I] know it, but [I] just can’t make it happen.” Why? Needless to say, you might not have true understanding. Perhaps you understand some of the words now – it’s just like selling snake oil (狗皮膏藥). Even if you truly understand it, if you lack sincere contemplation and analysis, sorry, by then, the mentality still conforms to the three mental poisons. When a statement with flaws is heard, well, anger arises within. When you are flattered, the feeling becomes light-hearted.

These are the signs of totally conforming to attachment. The rest of the time, you are foolish and struck dumb (癡癡呆呆). What is the use of that? So the author tells us to contemplate repeatedly. Once the correct view is there, and then you will definitely be able to apply it. This is the first one. In other words, restrain them with a constant maintenance of your mindfulness. As for the second,

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 24.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P15, L12]**

**The second, continuously persisting at mindfulness, means that you practice your mindfulness continuously and with respect.**

Now, with your understanding, the restraining tool is mindfulness – proper perception. Then you take that proper perception and “continuously persist.” This “continuously” means frequently, how frequent? Continuously, “persist” unceasingly, just like that. Continuously practice with respect. “With respect” means to have sincere and genuine care, practice this in meditation. Thus, to sincerely practice any Dharma category, there is no exception this [mindfulness] is required. So what did Buddha specifically refer to this as? It is joyous perseverance - the characteristic of joyous perseverance. So there are many references, in Lamrim as well as in *the Great Treatise on the Perfection of Wisdom*, and various scriptures talk about this. Joyous perseverance is supreme among the virtuous, joyous perseverance is supreme - the most important one [v.2 p.182]. Often we feel, alas, applying the teaching seems to be an easy task. That is totally wrong! After practicing for a while, you will gradually, gradually... the mind state will certainly be calm and at ease, that is the sign of attaining

the effect! In the beginning of your practice now, it requires tremendous joyous perseverance. That definitely must be flawless in each step!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 25.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P16, L7]***

So I have heard the teachings from Zen masters before, well, and I am constantly full of admiration! Zen masters said, what is studying Zen like? It is like going against the current in a boat. The current is like a waterfall. When the water falls, every minute it can pull your boat 100 feet further downstream. And for every minute you strive with all your effort against the current, you may advance 10 feet. However, pardon me, I will still try very hard to paddle upstream! By paddling with your greatest effort, the downstream pull will still happen, needless to say when you relax a bit. Well, it is interesting! As long as you are willing to apply this way, eventually success will occur. So some people describe it as “chasing a goat up a tree.” Goats can’t climb trees like cats can. However, what seems impossible can be accomplished!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 26.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P16, L14]***

Actually, besides Buddha Dharma, the worldly ways are the same. Therefore, I have mentioned to you all before, the so-called American great entrepreneurs of the steel industry and the automobile industry, how did they succeed? They all relied on this spirit [of joyous perseverance]. For those things considered impossible by others, [those entrepreneurs] continued with great determination and clenched their teeth. Now, even before we start, we already beat the drum of retreat. Moreover, we find all kinds of

excuses to protect the self – alas, this is not right and that is wrong. We focus on all sorts of narrow-minded ideas; this shows the mind is still pretty smart! However, these wits are muddled, one has used them wrong. So he will come up with all sorts of reasons to make himself become the fish that escaped the net. Ah, you think that you can get away with it! [You] do not recognize that this is actually harming one self. This is an absolute fact, true reality! So these are the areas that we need to look into more closely. Buddha taught us that he – the Buddha, how he achieved it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 27.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P17, L7]***

So this is saying that you need to continuously engage with an uplifted spirit. However, to uplift this spirit requires some know-how. If you uplift it in the wrong way, it is still not correct. So the sutras taught us, being too slow will not work, but being too hasty should also be avoided. Being too hasty will tighten up the string, and that is not good either. So to sum it up, all aspects require the skillful guidance of the virtuous teacher. This is the first one. Next, the second one,

### ***What you are restraining***

Once you have the tools to restrain, restrain what? What are you restraining?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 28.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P17, L13]***

**is the six sensory faculties.**

That is our six sensory faculties: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These we all know.



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 28.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P18, L1]***

### ***What you are restraining them from***

How do you restrain? From where do you begin restraining?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 28.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P18, L3]***

**is the six attractive and six unattractive sensory objects.**

This means the six sensory faculties interact with the six external objects, also known as the six sensory objects. Once you come upon the six sensory objects, you will develop either favorable or unfavorable reactions. For the favorable ones, you are attached. For the unfavorable ones, you are unattached. These sensory objects should be restrained, restrain them. Let's continue. At the end of this section, I will summarize the entire concept again. The fourth one,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 28.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P18, L7]***

### ***How to restrain the sensory faculties***

How do you restrain it? Earlier we were taught to restrain from the six sensory objects. Thus, how is it done?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 29.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P18, L9]***

**has two parts and they are as follows:**

What is the first one?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25A, 29.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P18, L11]***

**1) *Guarding the sensory faculties:* After the six consciousnesses arise based upon their sensory objects and faculties, the mental consciousness produces attachment for the six attractive sensory objects or hostility toward the six unattractive ones. “Guarding the sensory faculties” means protecting your mind against such attachment and hostility, and making a great effort not to produce them.**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P101; 25B, 00.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P21, L1]***

How to restrain? It is divided into two parts: the first one is to guard your sensory faculties. Because when your “sensory faculties” interact with the “objects”, at that time, the “consciousness” will arise. Upon the arising of the consciousness, it will form attachment toward favorable objects and hostility toward unfavorable objects. Right at this juncture, apply restraint on the sensory faculties.

Then how to restrain it? “Making a great effort not to produce them.” Do not allow your faculties to be influenced by the object in front of you develop into afflictions that conform to attachment and hostility; this is the first part. Next is “practicing restraint with the six sensory faculties is actually stopping the sensory faculties...” No not this one, the explanation continues.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 00.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P21, L4]***

**2) *Practicing restraint with the six sensory faculties is actually stopping the sensory faculties. For instance, you don't let them engage those sensory objects that will produce afflictions when, for instance, looked at.***

When we are trying to restrain, how do we do it? That is, because when [we] encountered the object, for example, when you see or hear it, [the object] will trigger your attachment or hostility. Once you are aware of it, this object can be blocked – do not indulge your faculties, do not let your faculties on the loose. What does this mean? For instance, why is it that in our Buddhist institute we don't normally have days off? Because we know very well, once we go out, very sorry, even if you are not distracted you will become distracted. So we realize, what is the reason we come here? To restrain [our faculties] so we can achieve this [monastic purpose]. If we are in the institute and there is a television next door, I like to watch TV, and thus I refrain from going! Moreover, eating this will trigger my greediness, so I eat as little as possible! Out of sight, out of mind, in a manner of speaking.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 01.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P22, L5]***

Of course, in the end, your mind is the key. However, the beginner's first step must be to restrain the interactions with the object. This we have to understand - we should know. So that is why meditation is necessary – essentially, you must have the aforementioned recognition of: why did I want to become ordained? Once you have this recognition – wanting to apply the teaching but not knowing how – then

you need to rely on someone you can depend on and have confidence in. When he tells you to refrain from something, you faithfully abide by it. At that time, his support for us is nothing but what? Well, it was just stated above [to protect our faculties]. The truly important thing you should understand is for those that you should not conform to, try your best to avoid them. This is what we should know.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 02.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P22, L11]***

**Furthermore, “guarding the sensory faculties” means neither to take note of the six sensory objects nor to imagine them,**

There are two things for us to actually restrain with regard to the six sensory objects: one is to take note of and the other is to imagine them. What is to take note of? What is imagining? It says below:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 02.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P22, L14]***

**and to achieve this through restraint, even when a sinful attitude such as attachment arises due to forgetfulness and an abundance of afflictions.**

If we often apply restraint, it is good to restrain; however, if you are not mindful and forget or are filled with afflictions, these are two different mental conditions. Forgetfulness is when you are supposed to restrain but forgot and didn't. There is even another kind – even if you are practicing restraint, but the afflictions are too abundant. Ah! For us, often when the objects arose, you feel within; alas, don't do it! But you just can't stop it – that is when the afflictions are

abundant, they dominate. If you can restrain in the way that was discussed above, [the afflictions] can be quelled. Next, it will tell us what to take note of and what is to imagine them.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 03.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P23, L6]***

**“Take note of” refers to perceiving and paying attention to the intentional or unintentional appearance of sensory objects such as forms that you should not look at.**

What is called “take note of” is, well! It says what we shouldn’t look at and, when it appears, the feeling at that time is, wow, this is good stuff. And then when you take a look at it, this is called taking note of. As for this aspect: eliminate it, do away with it! Next, it talks about imagining.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 04.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P23, L10]***

**“Imagining” can refer to the mental consciousness’s apprehension of sensory objects that produces attachment, hostility, and ignorance, after the six consciousnesses have perceived them. It can also refer to hearing about these sensory objects from others and then imagining them despite never having perceived them.**

As for “imagining,” it is after you have taken note of [the object], you have seen it, and followed it. It evoked your attachment to this object, like that. At that moment in your mind, this object has passed, it is no longer in your presence, and this requires restraint - restrain, it needs to be

restrained. The explanation earlier may not be very clear, once all five parts are discussed, I will analyze each one of them and then everyone will be very clear. The fifth one,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 4.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P24, L2]***

### **(5) Restraining means**

Thus, why do we need to restrain? Restrain what? It says:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 04.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P24, L4]***

**protecting the mind from being afflicted, and then setting it on something that is ethically neutral or virtuous.**

This is the purpose of our restraint - the objective. Normally, when we indulge our mental faculties while facing a sensory object, they certainly become contaminated, definitely contaminated either by attachment, hostility, or ignorance, just like that. So, at this juncture, with the effort of your restraint, prevent it from being contaminated, restrain from contamination, and allow it to dwell in virtue. At least, remain ethically neutral, which is neither nonvirtuous nor virtuous. This is when we need to apply restraint. Thus,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 05.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P24, L10]***

**Here, the time for setting the mind on something that is “unobscured and ethically neutral” is not when the**

**mind is apprehending a virtuous object of meditation, but at other times, such as during physical activities.**

The author specifically explains, what is this ethically neutral? It is unobscured and ethically neutral. What does it mean to be unobscured and ethically neutral? It is the respectful presence, such as walking, sitting there, or doing something. At that time, it is neither virtuous nor nonvirtuous. For, at that time, you are certainly not fully focused [on virtue]. For example, if I am prostrating to Buddha, that requires some walking, so walking is something other than prostration. There are two kinds of ethically neutral states: one is obscured and the other is unobscured. The contaminated one is obscured; the uncontaminated one is unobscured – this is a simple explanation. So now, the five parts are explained according to the text. Now I will review them separately from the text.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 06.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P25, L3]***

First, we need to recognize our normal states of mind, this mind of ours is doing what, what is in our mental thoughts? Our thoughts are spontaneous – our six sensory faculties, eyes to see, ears to hear, the mouth is either talking or eating, they have to be this way. The physical senses: this is nice, soft and comfortable, cool or hot, etc. Just like that. And then, when the five sensory faculties encounter the object, it will be immediately followed by the mental consciousness. Then you will make all kinds of erroneous discriminations right at that moment. That is how it works. What is this erroneous discrimination? Contamination and pollution are enhanced – these are all contaminated.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 07.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P25, L9]***

So, at that time, we need to think of a way to restrain it. What should we use to restrain? Rely on the mindfulness and vigilance that was mentioned earlier. Distinguish what is right and, with this recognition, then we can make a comparison. As it turns out, my original habit is wrong, only then does restraining it becomes possible! Otherwise, you are convoluted without knowing what is right and what is wrong. Of course, you would not know how to restrain. Therefore, mindfulness and vigilance are required. So mindfulness and vigilance are the best weapons for restraining.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 07.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P25, L13]***

Regarding this point, first, before you actually begin learning, repeatedly apply this restraint. Normally, in the first step of our actual application of the teaching, to be honest, this is the most important. Listen, listen to this, then reflect, reflect on this. After your reflection, what is the sign of reflection? It is the mental activities. Once you are used to reflecting, this thought will arise at any moment. Even if you are not trying, it arises readily and, when you do try, it arises right away. This is like when you use a weapon, in any situation where you need it, it is readily available and you are very familiar with how to use it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 08.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P26, L4]***

What does the weapon protect against? It is used to restrain our six sensory faculties. What are the conditions of



the six sensory faculties? When interacting with an object, the contamination is generated. There are two kinds of contamination: one is the contamination to take note of, and the other is the contamination of imagining. The contamination to take note of is, well, this looks nice and you go and take note of it. Afterwards, wow, [I] like it! As for imagining, it is after you have taken note of [this object] and you think: well, this object is mighty good. Ah! So, in your mind, you are thinking about what to do tomorrow, or you are trying to figure out how to get it. On the contrary, for an unfavorable object, hostility is generated. Now is this clear? So the following is restraining the sensory faculties.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 08.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P26, L9]***

Thus, for restraining the sensory faculties: for example, we now refer to *Sutra on the Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching*, in the very beginning, it says, "With the five sensory faculties, the mind is the master." Ah! That is the way it is, restraining from the mind, this applies to every aspect. So this is what we should learn as the very first step. May [I] ask, if we were to actually accomplish this, would [we] have any difficulties in practicing the teachings? There would be absolutely no difficulties, certainly no difficulties. So, based on this, it is said to be easy! Well, the actual practice is not that easy; although it is not that easy to practice, the effect is tremendously great! Whatever we are seeking is all included, as long as you can achieve this point, the rest will not be a concern.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 09.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P26, L15]***

Then, next is “acting with vigilance.” It is certain that, if you now make effort accordingly, there are many tasks for us to act upon or be proactive about. What should we do then? Well, right! Other than your practice, during your application, focus your full attention on the object of meditation – then, with the rest of the time, you are still able to restrain. But there are many situations where you are not able to restrain. For example, the text tells us to restrain taking note of [something]: you were told not to go out, but the abbot assigned a task where [you] have to go out. What should [you] do at that time? So the text follows by telling us to act with vigilance. For those things that we need to do, though the aforementioned restraint of the sensory faculties is not quite clear [to us yet], the author then tells us: toward those you already know, understand what is flawlessly accurate and follow it to engage in whatever is appropriate. At this time, not only will it be free of contamination, but it will also increase your merits, so there is nothing to worry about! Hence, let’s take a look, next:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 102; 25B, 10.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P27, L9]***

## **b) Acting with vigilance**

There are two parts.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 10.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P27, L11]***

### **i) The foundations upon which you act**

This has two parts, with regard to acting with vigilance; to “act” is to engage in situations. So for whatever things you are supposed to do, this you have to find out first – do

what should be done and what is right, refrain from what shouldn't be done and what is wrong. This is the first discernment. For the second one, it says, "acting vigilantly with respect to the foundations." With regard to things you are doing, one still needs to maintain mindfulness and vigilance while working on it. So, it is further divided below,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 102; 25B, 11.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P28, L1]***

**This section has two parts:**

These are things we should be engaged in.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 11.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P28, L3]***

**the five actions of movement, and the five actions of activity in a temple.**

Before discussing following signs of application, I truly feel: ah, the Dharma characteristics are so beautiful! These are in the details of our lives from the moment you open your eyes in the morning until the time you sleep, every portion, the [Dharma characteristics] provide explanations clearly and plainly. And this is not just in the words, if you have to memorize all of them, well, you can't remember them even if you try for a long time to memorize them! This is to tell you, once you recognize them, upon the recognition, you are constantly aware of them, you will know clearly, oh, it is wrong. At any time, it will be very clear, this is right, and when it is right, the application is at work!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 12.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P28, L9]***

We frequently talk about meditation, meditation now, and meditated for a while, the reason it is not effective is you don't even know the content of your application, how can you meditate? You are constantly influenced by afflictions without knowing it! Often, dominated by afflictions and one feels mighty proud of it! Wow, I thought of a way to take advantage and lied to someone, one feels pretty good about it. Well, that's wrong, totally wrong! So this has to be from the aspect of the Dharma characteristics, every step is tightly related here, and you apply your own evaluation. Essentially, our application of the teaching is a personal choice, absolutely no one forcing us by saying: "ah, so and so, you have to shave your head and be ordained!" There is no such thing. I feel [ordination] is great! So since it is voluntary, then the engagement should be sincere. Now there are five – five actions of movement, and five actions of activity in a temple. For our monastic actions, there is nothing more than these. "Movement" means your walking, etc. "Activity in the temple" includes eating, etc. Next, let's continue,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 13.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P29, L3]***

**The five actions of movement are:**

Movement, what should you be doing?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 102; 25B, 13.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P29, L5]***

**(1) actions of the body: going out to other places, like towns and temples, and returning from them;**

That's how it is. It is about our physical movement. Other than the things that we need to do in the temple, you have to go to other places! Other places or buying things in the city, or other temples' summer retreats, visits, or invitations, etc. Thus, the movement to and from is considered as one action.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 13.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P29, L9]***

**(2) actions of the eyes:**

Eyes, when we are walking, what about the eyes....

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 13.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P29, L11]***

**both slightly looking at various objects because you have seen them unintentionally, and fully viewing those objects you have intentionally looked at;**

As for the second one, eyes. There are two situations with the eyes: one is unintentional, well, this is one kind where you look around randomly. The second type is where you seriously thought about it ahead of time – well, what to do and what are you going to see – and then you go to look at it. So other than our body and eyes, what else?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 14.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P30, L3]***

### **(3) actions of the limbs, fingers, and toes:**

The physical form also requires these [restraints]. What about limbs, fingers, and toes?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 14.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P30, L5]***

**stretching out and contracting the limbs, fingers, and toes;**

Why are these movements not included as part of the physical action? Because, for example, the aforementioned actions of the body, the key is for you to go to places, and then here I am sitting, it seems...this is about moving to engage in things. In other words, doing anything, physically or in gesture, both are included, it covers both. And then next,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 14.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P30, L9]***

**(4) actions of religious robes and alms bowls: handling and making use of the three kinds of religious robes and the alms bowl; and**

This is the action of our religious robes and alms bowls; these are what we monastics are required to do.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P102; 25B, 14.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P30, L11]***

**(5) actions related to alms: eating, drinking and so on.**

This is about our alms round. However, now we just go to the dining hall, from cooking to eating. And, afterwards, washing dishes and buying food, etc.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 15.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P31, L1]***

**The five actions of activity in a temple are:**

The above are about movements, and now these are the five actions of activity in the temple.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 15.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P31, L3]***

**(1) actions of the body: walking in a designated area; going to one who is in accord with the teaching; entering a passageway for the sake of receiving the teaching;**

What does “the body” do? It walks, stands, sits, and lies down, etc. So walking includes all these.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 15.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P31, L5]***

**standing in the presence of those whom you are going to see and who are in accord with the teaching - the abbot, master, guru, and the like;**

Standing refers to our being here, or when we are accompanied by fellow practitioners or with the abbot, master, guru, and the like. Other than the abbot and master, for example, now over here we, well, invite a Dharma Master or the senior monk etc. to teach us. And some are

our immediate gurus; some are “the like”. In other words, they are practitioners who are better than us, they may not have the specific characteristics of a guru, however they are actually senior to us, and we should pay respect. After the standing – walking, standing and sitting – “standing” is being stationary in a place, next is “sitting.”

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P1 03; 25B, 16.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P31, L11]***

**or sitting in the full lotus posture upon a seat, and so on;**

For walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, the last part about lying down is discussed in a separate section [v.1 p.106], so it is not included here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 16.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P32, L1]***

***(2) actions of speech:***

This is about talking!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 16.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P32, L3]***

**receiving the oral transmission of the twelve branches of scripture on which you have not previously received oral transmission; understanding all of these; reciting that which you have received; teaching them to others; and conversing with others in order to encourage their joyous perseverance;**



Next is the “actions of speech.” When we speak, what do we talk about? The author tells us, if we don’t understand the concepts in the scriptures and commentaries, etc. – the “twelve branches of scriptures” include all of them and these need to be understood. Once you have this understanding, then you individually recite it or help others [to recite], or “converse with others in order to encourage their joyous perseverance.” You notice here, it is either be quiet or, once engaging in speech, all is conforming to the [scriptures]. It is the same with the eyes and every mental momentum is nothing but this.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 17.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P32, L10]***

### ***(3) actions of mind:***

In the end, what do we do with our minds?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 17.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P32, L12]***

**sleeping in the middle period of the night; retiring to a quiet place and then not speaking while you think over the meaning of what you have heard, practice concentration by means of the nine mental states, and strive for insight; and, when feeling fatigued during hot weather, doing something to dispel your desire to fall asleep at an improper time; and**

So what do you do with the action of the mind? Or, often during quiet times, this means what to do when it is quiet. Additionally, it is to maintain inner peace. “In the

middle period of the night” means at night during bedtime. Moreover, go to a quiet place to “think over the meaning of what you have heard” – one should truly reflect in that spot, a place where others will not disturb you. Or let others know [not to disturb you], well, yes, that is right! “Practice concentration by means of the nine mental states.” These nine mental states are for concentration. Later, in the section on meditative serenity and insight [V. 3 Ch. 5], the Samatha [meditative serenity] section will be discussed in detail. These “nine mental states” are the sequence for our advancement. The first mental state is such, the second is such, and all the way to the ninth mental state, that is Samatha. And following it is insight. Another aspect, when it is really hot, even if it is not time for sleep – sleeping should only be during the middle of the night – normally, when you get up, how do you acclimate to it. The only time we are allowed to relax is [the middle of the night], when you can relax and be at ease. Thus, this is about the actions of the mind.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 19.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P33, L10]***

***(4) actions of day and (5) actions of night:***

Other than the above, the author combines the [actions of] day and night. So all 24 hours are included without any exception.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 19.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P33, L13]***

**both of these refer to not sleeping in the daytime or in the first and last periods of the night. These also refer to physical and verbal actions. Furthermore,**

**the above statement “Sleeping in the middle period of the night” refers only to actions of the night and actions of mind.**

So during the daytime and the first and last periods of the night, we shouldn't sleep. To summarize, [these other periods] are not for sleeping, so if we don't sleep, then what should be done? That is, what should we do during those hours? So the text says, while not sleeping, what should the physical and verbal actions be? Below, it explains: during the middle period of the night – which is from 10 pm to 2 am – what to do when we are sleeping? The author will tell us next – sleep, go ahead and sleep. He also taught us how to be mindful of the teachings while sleeping.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 20.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P34, L5]***

Now let's see, up to here, the earlier section was about restraining sensory faculties. However, there are things that require our action. Thus, for all these actions, how should you properly engage? The author taught us clearly how to engage in each part. Now we often say, wow the southern lineage, how they apply the teaching here and there seems to be very intricate! Do we not have this in our northern lineage? Most definitely, yes! However, all of us are not earnest in learning what is most important to us now. Even you were told to, the sincerity is not there. The key is right here – that is, in any situation, your every move, every thought, there are intricate rules.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 20.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P34, L11]***

It was more than ten years ago when I still did not understand. I did not know this concept and, even though I had heard about it, I still didn't understand. I met a practitioner from the southern lineage, and he talked about serenity and insight. For example, when walking, well, his steps were very slow, and then, the way to watch the mental thoughts when engaging in any task. Ah, I felt this teaching was so great! But I turned around and looked, alas, it turns out that what we have is a "family treasure!" This happens to be our attitudes; we are not properly using the family treasure and instead envy others. In fact, even if others told you about [how to walk], would [you] be able to achieve it? You can't make it happen either. Actually, the tendency of laziness is within our minds; when trying to lift it up, it just won't. Alas, seeing others' strength, it is so admirable! However, this is not for you to belittle that [admiration], this is very important! We are just fortunate enough to have that little bit of yearning for virtue. The reason that we are still ordinary beings is because of this – just rely on this little bit of yearning for virtue. And [we] will figure out all sorts of methods to develop this yearning. [We] will apply all kinds of methods to clear away adversity and enhance favorable conditions. Then this yearning of yours for virtue will become stronger and stronger, weightier and weightier, more and more powerful. By then, you will be able to do it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 21.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P35, L6]***

Therefore, with what I said earlier, it was absolutely not to belittle [the southern lineage]. My emphasis was to preserve this treasure. Instead of just staying with the yearning of virtue, oh well, always envy others. That is when you will just stay put, like a toad wishing for a bite of the swan [to crave for what one is not worthy of] with a wide-

open mouth. Even waiting until death will be to no avail! This concept is mentioned to us here in passing.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 22.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P35, L9]***

## **ii) Acting vigilantly with respect to the foundations**

The above tells us about the foundations. Thus, among them, how should we engage? It is to tell us whatever we do, [we] need to have proper understanding and abide by it to engage in it. It explains further...

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 22.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P35, L12]***

**Acting vigilantly with respect to the above-mentioned ten foundations is as follows. When you begin either movement or activity, right from the outset act conscientiously and establish mindfulness with respect to that action.**

The key is right here! It points out that these are all the things for us to do now. Take heed of one point here! In other words, for those of us who are sincere about studying Buddha Dharma as a monastic, we should recognize: other than the [above actions], all other irrelevant matters should be renounced. Therefore, to earnestly study Buddha Dharma, especially when advancing into more profound practice, one must fully focus on the study, and that requires being a monastic. Thus, for those of us, as monastics who are still engaged in this and busy with that, unable to let go, ah, when one talks about it, it is all in the name of promoting the teaching to benefit sentient beings. That is great – of course promoting the teaching to benefit others is necessary!

You have to accomplish it for yourself first and obtain the experience, and then you become willing to sacrifice yourself for others. You will be clearly aware that doing that will be inconvenient for you, yet you will still choose to promote the teaching and benefit others. This is living up to the name of promoting-the-teaching-to-benefit-others! However, as for now, the mind is filled with afflictions and is dominated by these afflictions. Alas, attached to this and that, trying to find excuses in the name of promoting the teaching to benefit others. Ah, how ridiculous! Very absurd!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 23.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P36, L8]***

Thus, you might read in other classic scriptures: *The Ten Wheel Sutra of Ksitigarbha* specifically mentions this and explained it. We have discussed many quotes from *Ksitigarbha Sutra* before, actually it is not the *Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva's Root Aspiration Sutra*, and it is *the Ten Wheel Sutra of Ksitigarbha*. You can look into it; all the teaching in it reveals this point to us. Right now, we often say Mahayana practitioners slander sravakas, this not permitted, don't do it! For if you were a true Mahayana practitioner, how could you slander sravakas? This definitely would not happen! I just want to mention this here in passing.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, 103; 25B, 24.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P36, L13]***

So now we say, for the things we engaged in, regardless of whether they are movements or activities, with these actions, preparation is necessary before we engage in them. What kind of preparation? Establish mindfulness. "Right from the outset" establishing this mindfulness. How to properly establish this mindfulness? It was covered earlier:

repeatedly reflect. Reflect on what? One must first know what is correct and what is not – with proper understanding. To understand it accurately requires listening to the teaching. Thus, the systematic order is very clear. First, listen to what is right and what is wrong. Have an accurate understanding and listen well – thus, it says to “listen well, and contemplate thoroughly” on the key points! All sutras taught us to “listen well, thoroughly, and hold it in mind.” Then the concepts will be revealed to you. You listen thoroughly and well, and hold it in mind, and then you abide by the concept. By doing so, you are on the right track. And remain mindful during the time of action, hold on to the concept, never allow any loopholes.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 25.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P37, L6]***

**Imbued with both of these, analyze the elements of the situation and analyze how you should proceed; then think about and arrive at an understanding of the situation in light of what you have concluded.**

According to the two principles described above, in other words, “imbued” means your mind remains in this condition, maintains this condition. You are clearly aware of what you are engaging in, and then dwell on this proper concept this is mindfulness. Then one can say with joyous perseverance: “Well, I now know how this should be done.” Never mess it up, and guard against the intrusion of afflictions. This joyous perseverance is the best protection – it protects the mindfulness. Imbued by these two, then you will think: now I am engaging to “analyze the elements of the situation,” first analyze how to do it; then “analyze how you should proceed.” That is to say, the “elements” are to observe the sign of application, the “proceed” is the way to approach it.

“Then think about and arrive at an understanding of the situation in light of what you have concluded,” observe according to the subjective aspect. Within this,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 26.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P38, L1]***

**In this regard, there are four elements:**

This will be discussed based on the related elements.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 26.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P38, L3]***

**1) *The element of basis:* With respect to any of the ten foundations — those of the actions of body and so on — you should analyze what will be happening and how to proceed, and then consider the situation in light of what you have concluded. For example, with respect to actions of going out and returning, understand the manner of going and coming as it is taught in the texts on discipline. Then reflect while going and coming, “Now I am doing this and now this.”**

The text is pretty easy to understand, however it still requires some explanation. What elements? For example, let’s take a look. I want to go somewhere and come back, and what should the element be? It states on the way out, for instance, while we are walking, do not swing our arms or the like, don’t do that. Do not look around aimlessly, that is the way. So now I come to think of it, back then, when I just ordained and staying in Tung-jing abode, the Dharma Master told us, “Well, there is a Dharma Assembly somewhere, you all need to attend.” Thus the monastery



paid for it, and attendance was required! Before leaving, [we] were told: “You should not line up side-by-side!” On the way there, lining up side-by-side was not allowed, so what did [we] do – [we] lined up neatly in a single file, one after another, just like that. So when we went out, it was just like in the army – the steps were in unison. At that time, [I] thought: “Alas, this Dharma Master even wanted to control things like this!” Now that [I] think about it, it’s absolutely right! Every detail has its reliable sources, all of them are very important!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P103; 25B, 28.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P38, L14]***

So here, it is the same, that’s the sign of our application. We should think: how should we do it? With your proper understanding, that is the time when the correct view will arise. So when you actually take on the path, your mind is properly set – this is the way I want to go about it. Therefore, to carry it out in this manner, then every direction... will not go wrong. Thus, often, when we uphold ethical disciplines – such as a respectful attitude and other things mentioned here – not only mindfully guard it closely, but also make sure the application is flawless. It is so wonderful!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 25B, 28.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P39, L5]***

**2) *The element of direction:* With regards to directions, you analyze to discover what will be happening and how to proceed, and then consider the situation in light of what you have concluded. For instance, when going out, do not go to the five places — one that sells liquor, and so on. Having understood that you should go to places other than**

**those, be vigilant with regard to this when you go out.**

The second, for example, it says previously what to do when we are going back and forth. This second one is regarding the place we are going. The text listed above tells us the places for us to go, and there are five places should be avoided\*: liquor stores or brothels... these are places we should refrain from going. Thus, other than these, if we need to be in other places, then we should go. While going, the same applies – regarding the target location, “establish mindfully” so I know where I am going.

[\*v.1 p.387 #167 The five places are (1) a place that sells liquor, (2) a brothel, (3) a bad slaughterhouse, (4) the king’s palace, and (5) a regular slaughterhouse.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P43, L1]***

Now, we often muck around with nothing to do, and when we see someone going out, “Hey! You’re going out, I want to go, too!” “What do you need to do?” “Well, I’m bored!” So you say you are practicing, such is the level of practice! Ah, that is how it is. Absolutely, so I am telling you, if you truly want to apply the teaching, then you will be grateful for all the rules that were set. I did not set these rules – the Buddha and Bodhisattvas set them. I also received from my virtuous teacher... back then, I often had chores, he always asked, “Well, what are you doing? How long will you be gone?” Well! In my mind, then, because of this, I dared not to randomly ask [to go anywhere]. Even now I still continue to benefit from this indefinitely. So gradually, gradually you become disciplined, and when you get into a habit, then it will gradually become better. So my teacher told me then, “Now you may feel that it’s too strict,

but there will be a time when you wish it were more strict but you won't have that. You will feel remorseful, and it will be too late."

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 00.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P43, L9]***

I will also apply a similar attitude toward everyone now. What is in your minds I don't know, but in my mind, this is the best that I can offer you. I am still very delighted; you could say that it is a combination of sorrow and joy, protecting you, guarding you! I am very sincere about this [responsibility of mine] here. So, I want to specifically explain: for the ones coming here to merely provide lip service, [you] are not welcome here! Please find other places and prepare yourselves first. However, once here, you are not expected to achieve it right away – I have explained this very clearly. As long as one has the mentality that I am here to learn and would like to achieve it, then it is right! Thus, with this mindset, then slowly, gradually we will transform our habits within these strict requirements and slowly, slowly advance. Next, [page 104] the third element. In the text:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 02.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P44, L7]***

**3) *The element of time:*** With regards to any period of time, you analyze to discover what will be happening and how to proceed, and then consider the situation in light of what you have concluded. For example, once you have understood that it is proper to go to town in the morning but not in the afternoon, act accordingly and be vigilant at that time.

So the third element is other than going outside, what about timing? This is easy to understand, it says that morning visits are permitted and afternoon ones are not. Thus you just apply according to what you know.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 02.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P44, L11]***

**4) *The element of actions:*** no matter how many actions you undertake, you analyze to discover what will be happening and how to proceed, and then consider the situation in light of what you have concluded. For example, when you go out, keep in mind any precepts there may be on going out, such as “Go to another domicile in a very restrained manner.”

So, for the last element, with the things you are doing, your activities, how should they be handled? So you also skillfully analyze your task, how should you go about it? The author tells us next, when going to someone’s house, we should have skillful restraint. For example, now that I am teaching here, so then how should I act while giving teachings? For instance, if I am there to listen, what should be done when listening? Even when we routinely go to the prayer hall or the dining hall, there is a defined set of guidelines for everything, engage in everything with this proper attitude.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 3.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P45, L4]***

**In short, be mindful of whatever behaviors may take place in the night or day. Then understand which are to be done and which not to be done. Whenever engaging in those which are to be done or turning away from**

**those which are not to be done, be vigilant, and think, “Now I am engaging in or turning away from this, and now this.” If you do this, it is said that you will not be tarnished by infractions in this lifetime; even after death, you will not fall into the miserable realms; and you will have the preconditions for attaining knowledge of the paths that you have not yet attained.**

In summary, with this condition, regardless of whether it is day or night, all our behavior and actions should fully remain mindful without forgetting anything, instead of wasted in dull-wittedness, as though we were drifting in the wind or like the fence sitter. But if [you] have the proper understanding of what [you] are engaged in now: which one should be done and which one should be avoided. Then whether walking or sitting, abide by one’s proper understanding. Thus, by so doing, no matter whether [you] are standing still, walking, moving, or sitting, all will be appropriate without infractions. Because there are no infractions, then the downfall will not follow. Because you are capable of doing this, all your aspirations can be achieved. The preceding description is ethical discipline. With this encompassing upholding of the ethical discipline, concentration and wisdom will follow. So this is for us to attain what we aspire to. All ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom begin from here – this is the cause. If you have obtained what is correct and planted a proper cause in this way, the comparable effect must also be perfect.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 05.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P46, L2]***

So to conclude what was described above, it says that there are these four preconditions. Actually, in other words, now with our study of the Dharma as ordained monastics,

everything [we] do is included in these. So these aspects are further divided into a few categories: first, regarding the content of your engagement, for instance, you are now going somewhere, how do you go there? When you are coming, how to do it? Then, with the locations, what is permissible or not, is the timing according to the precepts or not. Then, with the things you do, what are they, how should you proceed. Take a look, is there anything left out? Make sure there is no omission! And, at night, later the author will tell us how to sleep. This is very explicit and clear.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 06.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P46, L8]***

When engaging in this, be mindfully vigilant. Mindfully vigilant of what? Karma refers to the mental activity or mental karma. You clearly and plainly know that this is completely in accordance with the teachings. Then, because you have this vigilance, your physical and verbal activities will follow – your body and speech will conform. Once your physical, verbal, and mental three karmic deeds are all pure, may [I] ask, will you descend to hell? So there is a funny story, but it's absolutely true. It says that once you abide by the above and end up in hell, Yama [Lord of death] looks through the ledger: "Sorry! You don't belong here because you did not register!" Ah, that is how it works! Yama will respectfully send you to heaven. When it comes down to it, it is just this simple!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 07.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P46, L14]***

So here, we should be inspired to have this desire, we definitely have this ability. This is why I specifically mentioned: it is not that we lack intelligence and ability, but

because we've misused it. This intelligence and ability becomes worldly intellect, and becomes concealed by one's own faults. "Alas! I thought of this really good trick, others [did not know] ...." Then it seems as though one can get away with it, wrong! You've harmed yourself. You should apply your intelligence here [to act vigilantly]. Once a mistake is made, immediately reveal it and confess: "Alas, [I am] wrong! Wrong! Wrong!" So if you are able to apply accordingly, then what is the mistake itself – confession of sins, which is one of the primary merits in the *Ten Great Aspirations* [*Seven Branches of Worship*]. This point is very important! So let's continue.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 08.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P47, L5]***

**I have arranged both this section on acting vigilantly and the section on restraining the sensory faculties in accordance with the noble being Asanga's citations of sutras and the subsequent commentaries on the meaning of those citations.**

With the above, these two [acting vigilantly and restraining sensory faculties] are the explanations that Asanga Bodhisattva quoted from sutras. All these sincere sages, their words are all from a reliable source. What is the source? It has to be taught by Buddha. These sages took the essence and principles from Buddha and explained them further to clearly expound accordingly. So, when we talk about the sign of Dharma characteristics, once you understand this section, then the recognition of the wonder of the sign of Dharma characteristics will arise! Dharma characteristics are so wonderful! Actually, this is required for our study of the Dharma, especially in the beginning. It reveals every detail to you clearly, yet now we often feel:

alas, you just don't need to discern and that is it! Thus, if one is not discerning, then what is one in the midst of? One will be in the midst of being dull-witted, very unfortunate! Very pathetic! Next:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 09.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P47, L12]***

**Work on these practices, for it is said that if you do, you will have unusual success in all your virtuous practices;**

Once [you] have strived at it as stated above, take heed! Strive at it, then all virtues will increase, nothing else can be compared to this. So this is the best approach for meditation!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A, 09.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P48, L1]***

**in particular, your ethical discipline will be completely pure; and you will easily attain the nondiscursive states of concentration that comprise meditative serenity and insight.**

In particular, what does this lead to? “Ethical discipline will be completely pure.” We need to abide by ethical discipline; ethical discipline is referenced everywhere, vows, and precepts. Well! You must begin to uphold it from here; this is where you can truly uphold ethical discipline. Then, because the root of your ethical discipline is pure, continue with this same approach thus meditative serenity and insight will arise. By then, the attainment of a “nondiscursive state of concentration” will be achieved, and that is when you have genuine attainment of the nondiscursive ultimate truth! Goodness, Amitabha Buddha! But now we are discarding the preceding [practices], just staying in the non-discerning,



dull-witted state, submerged in our great... this is what, this great dangerous pit of being comfortable and snug. It is imposing harm on the self! Thus, make effort!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P104; 26A,10.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P48, L8]***

Work on these practices. This is very important. Furthermore, this specifically relates to our 24 hours day, other than [the first two] preconditions – eating and sleeping seem to easily elicit afflictions and laxity. So, next it states:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 10.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P48, L11]***

### **c) Appropriate diet**

So now this is divided into four parts.

**An appropriate diet has four attributes:**

#### **1) Not eating too little:**

Not too little.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 11.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P49, L1]***

**If you eat too little food, you will be hungry and will become weak, leaving no strength for virtuous activities. Therefore, “not eating too little” means that you must eat just the amount that will allow you not to be afflicted by hunger until tomorrow’s meal.**

It says not to have too little [because] if you do, you will not have enough energy. So eat enough to sustain oneself until tomorrow's meal. Please be careful on this! Often, when we truly feel hungry, it is actually not hunger or not having eaten enough. No! It is your habit. For example, we normally eat three meals a day. If all of a sudden, you are reduced to two meals, by the evening, naturally one will feel, "Ah, nothing in [the stomach]." So the feeling is there, but it may not necessarily mean hunger. So the other day, our senior abbot told me something and I knew [it was true] as well. In the earlier days, about 30 years ago most areas in China, they only ate two meals: once in the morning and once in the afternoon, that's it. It was fine and there weren't any problems. Now for us, we eat three meals and we want nutrition and all kinds of extras, yet it is still not enough. Honestly speaking, it's abundant, overly abundant! We might try it for ourselves. No need to criticize others. Before your ordination, evaluate yourself – the food we eat in two meals is more than what the average person eats in three meals, do you believe it? You can go check it out, even take a closer look; I was once like that, too. In the past, when I ate each meal, the bowl was filled just to the rim. Later, I upheld the ethical discipline of not eating in the afternoon; I could finish three bowls during a meal! That's in one meal – yet two meals plus those dishes – you might want to look into it. This is absolutely true.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 12.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P49, L13]***

Now we emphasize nutrition, to seriously talk about it, the country with the best nutrition should be the United States. Many of you have been there before, you all can understand. You all will have the opportunity to go. The majority of Americans get up in the morning and many of

them don't eat anything, just like that. Some will at most drink something or eat some fruit, or they may buy a cup of coffee on the road then a hot dog or sandwich, that is it! Lunch is the same, and at night they go home to have a decent meal. For us now, if we were to have two hot dogs for breakfast and lunch and have two cups of coffee, is that all for us? There is more to it! Yet we still feel that it is not enough. However, as far as nutrition is concerned, it is absolutely sufficient, this we have to recognize. Actually, the reason I specifically emphasize this point is for you to recognize this concept. When we digest something, it consumes energy; it uses a lot of energy. The more you eat, the more you need to digest – digestion is required! That is how it works. So when we eat a lot, actually, this is the greatest waste for us.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 14.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P50, L7]***

How do you measure yourself? Just like this: you might want to eat the same quantity for a period of time. And then, after you have maintained it for a while, if you lose weight then that means it is not enough. However, if you just lose a little bit, it does not count. This is an accurate way to measure. If you have two meals a day for more than 10 days and still feel unaccustomed to it, then that means [you are not eating enough]. In the beginning, the feeling is definitely like this. Here, I just want to specifically point this out.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 14.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P50, L11]***

The majority of the population in China [in the past] was all like this [eating two meals a day]! They are doing well. So

after China opened to the world again, we went back and I saw it for myself, too. There was an elderly lady who came to the United States. She is 87 this year. According to her own description, at age 87 of course she wasn't working. She said a few years back when she was 80 years old; she still carried heavy loads balanced on a pole on her shoulders. When she was asked, what do you eat? Ah! Some of you have been there, some haven't. Let me tell you now, during the Cultural Revolution, it was such a hard time. There was nothing like the food that we have now! For example, we now toss away the yellowish vegetable leaves; they didn't even have yellow leaves to eat. My goodness! Alas! When any little bit was picked, it was treasured and wasn't thrown away. The little strings that fell from the turnips to the ground would certainly be picked up, washed, and eaten, just like that! The chaff and bran were all eaten, that's all they got to eat! What nutrition is there? What vitamins are there? What protein is there? But she is [87] years old now! She still shouldered things totaling over one hundred catty [equal to 50 kg]. I've met this elder in person. Her son is one of the partners of Diho Market in Los Angeles. You can see for yourself personally... oh, she was looking quite energetic! How old is my mother this year? I think my mother is 86 or 87, when I went back to see her, she didn't even have any teeth left. [I] tried to fix some vegetables for her, but she didn't want it. She just ate fermented soybean curd every day. I said how could that be? Well, that works perfectly fine!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 16.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P51, L9]***

I have also told you my own experience. Thus, what is most important for us now is the afflictive view, a belief in the supremacy of wrong views [v.1 p.299]. Before you even

start, you feel, “Alas, there isn’t enough nutrition!” Then, truly the nutrition will be deficient. Why? For we are tumbling in the cycle of ignorant state of consciousness and are dominated by these [afflictions]. Just like usually when you see two people talking, it has nothing to do with you. Yet you might think: “These two guys are talking about me!” Your mind is filled with afflictions, but they have nothing to do with you yet you are afflicted! I believe we all have this experience. Now, before we eat, we already have the pre-occupied feeling: ah, there isn’t enough nutrition today! Certainly, if the nutrition is not sufficient, it will affect your emotions. Nowadays, those learning Buddha Dharma are so inverted, claiming that they are applying the teaching, what kind application is it! So, here, I am definitely not exaggerating. This is for us to be encouraged, try to properly uplift [yourself], be uplifted from [the teaching] here! As for the correct view, I am not trying to give you pressure, but here is a point that you should use to encourage yourself: “Certainly, the actual application can be slow, but this correct view must be established first.” It is too important, such an important concept! So then if [eating] too little is not good, but too much is not good either.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 17.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P52, L4]***

**2) *Not eating too much:* This is because if you eat too much, your body will be heavy,**

Well, I think I will not say too much about this topic!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 17.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P52, L6]***

**as if you were carrying a burden. It will be hard to breathe in and out. Sleepiness and lethargy will increase.**

After eating too much, lethargy follows.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 17.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P52, L8]***

**You will be unfit for any action,**

Well, when sitting up, that will be when one gets dizzy, just like that. After meals, you will be extremely lethargic.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 17.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P52, L10]***

**so you will have no strength for eliminating the afflictions.**

What is the purpose of being a monastic? It is to “eliminate the afflictions.” Then it turns out that you came here [to the monastery] for the sake of tending to this mouth and stomach, alas! First, you are too hungry to manage anything, but after eating you are too sleepy and can’t manage anything either! After the sleepiness, one still need to take care of chores, and still can’t [remove afflictions]. Shortly after finishing the chores, you are hungry again and still can’t manage [affliction]! So, when would a good time be? Even though we are joking about this, I just recalled a statement from one great master: “There is pain in my laughter!” It’s just like that, absolutely true – there is pain in the laughter!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 18.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P53, L4]***

### **3) *Eating digestible and wholesome food:***

As for eating, eat appropriate and digestible food.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 18.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P53, L6]***

**With such food you eliminate old feelings of suffering related to food**

For any food that causes this, eliminate it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 18.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P53, L8]***

**and you do not create new ones.**

This point is to eat wholesome foods, not anything that is unwholesome. This is the reason why I lay down for a bit last night. A few days ago, people said well, your diet... they noticed it was inappropriate. Actually, I knew about it, but it was still my own carelessness, I wasn't careful enough. In the past two days, there were papayas. I thought there was so much of it, so I should eat more. I ate more but then became uncomfortable. Generally, I would not do this because I already felt the discomfort. So that morning, the breakfast was spicy and lunch was too salty. Well! I ate... but I thought that I should be an accommodating member of the community. That afternoon, the discomfort started, and it became really bad that I had no other choice but to lie down for a while. Later, a disciple bought some medicine and

helped prepare it! Then that eased the discomfort! So, here, it tells you that diet is still pretty important. Lastly:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 19.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P54, L3]***

**4) Eating appropriate food which does not produce afflictions:**

This is regarding our diets.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 19.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P54, L5]***

**With such food you do not create misdeeds, and you stay happy.**

This is divided into two parts: when you eat, please be mindful! “Food which does not produce afflictions.” This statement is difficult to maintain! However, we have to keep it in mind as our goal. From my experience, let me tell you, the issue is not how difficult the task is, it is not knowing the skillful means. And even if you have the skill, you may be unwilling to do it. This I believe, perhaps many of you sitting here have the same experience. It is just like what I said the other day – when I was first ordained, a fellow practitioner told me, “Alas, now that I am ordained, I can let go of everything except my mouth.” Now that I think of this, ah, nothing more needs to be said about it. At least this is a fact – it is hard to let go of the mouth. I put a lot of effort into this when I tried very hard to eat one meal a day. In the end, I ended up eating more in one meal, alas! I ate much more food, and the discomfort from eating was hard to deal with. No, this was not working, no! Going back to two meals, the issue was still not resolved! It has been this way for years.



Finally, with this proper recognition, then I knew – one must be prepared ahead of time to maintain the proper mindset.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 20.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P55, L1]***

So there was a long period of time for me, at the end of my morning session followed by an important practice. What is this morning practice? To reflect on the faults of food and my reason for being here, to mindfully review it. Afterwards, sit there and thoroughly contemplate on it, very carefully think through it. Sometimes, I would just quickly go over them because, well, the kitchen is waiting for me [to do chores]. Then [this practice] wouldn't be effective. But there were times when I would go through it and think about it, I felt quite peaceful, and it was quite clear and delightful. Regardless of whether I reflected quickly or slowly, the mind focused on the subject, and I went to the kitchen with certainty. Well! It worked right away, and this was absolutely effective. Once it took effect, then I tried to put the best foods there. Ah! Normally when I saw them, the intention was to keep them for myself. But, at that time, the mentality was different – such delicious food, give it away or donate it! Then I gave away the best food to the birds. If the birds wouldn't eat it, gave it to the ants. If the ants wouldn't eat it, I would say, "To perfect my spirit of generosity, even if it had to be thrown in the trashcan, I won't eat it!" After this was all done, the feeling was very pleased, I had never been this happy before. Because I felt that I have tried for more than a decade and could not tame [this attachment to certain foods]. Well, with just such a simple method it is achieved!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 21.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P55, L11]***

However, it doesn't mean that I can continuously do this! Later, I knew that, as long as you are mindful of the proper perception, the effect is absolutely positive. Besides, once you have achieved the true effect, how wonderful! All the other concordant conditions will arise. So this is not hard, not difficult! The hard part is being unable to attain proper recognition. And even if you have proper recognition, you are not willing to practice. Before you even begin, the drum of retreat is already beating within: alas, I'm only an ordinary being! Then you are destined – you have no way out, you will never get rid of [afflictions]! This I am pointing out here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 22.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P56, L1]***

Once you have this experience, how do you truly feel? You will experience the happiness of not being bond by affliction, and that is the joy of Dharma. By then, seeing others, I was like that too – alas, when the eyes seeing others eat more good food... now it has no impact [on me]. Well, it is a pity to talk about; I don't know what to do to help this person? He helped me resolve this issue – if he hadn't eaten it and [instead] left the food until the next day to invigorate my attachment again, I'm so thankful to him! So the mentality is completely different, this is an absolute fact! Once you have this, then you can move forward in further discipline. I just want to mention about this contaminated mind here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 23.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P56, L7]***

Once you have understood this contaminated mind, then you can eat appropriately. But, conversely, if you persist with this appropriate diet, even if you are

contaminated, the benefit is still there. Because at least you are eating properly, after eating you won't keep thinking about it. Maybe on the first day you would feel the amount is a bit too little, but after the third day of having less food, you become used to it. Then the following maintenance of your body and mind will not be as weighty as before. By then, your study will be more effective. Let's think about it, is it right?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 23.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P56, L11]***

Thus, here, this is why I often bring it up, that is how it works. Even though you might not be used to it in the beginning, but after a few days you will get used to it. Take this place for example. In the beginning, everyone feels that the arhat-dish [a pot of assorted vegetables for monastery meal], well, so difficult [to accept], but after eating it for a few days, everyone is pretty pleased with it! That is the way it is! So make note of this! This is absolutely a true fact. Let me tell you, you must not emphasize the taste, [do not] focus on it! So if we can achieve "eating foods which do not produce afflictions" and eat "appropriate" foods, these are the best. However, most of the time for us – I know for myself – we lack these qualifications. What is our qualification? Our virtuous roots from past lives have led us to forsake the worldly path and we are willing to be here [in the monastery], this present state is very precious. So what should be done? Take in the qualification [as a monastic] with the recognition that it will help me. Even though, in the beginning, we are not used to it and feel wronged, but after doing it for a while, well, gradually conform to it. [I] just mention it in passing. In this manner, "with such food, you do not create misdeeds." In that case, then "you stay happy." Then our final goal is achieved!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 24.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P57, L5]***

**Moreover, the remedy for craving foods**

That is another one. We can't let go of food. What correct method can be applied to remedy this?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 24.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P57, L7]***

**lies within meditating on the faults of food. There are three faults:**

This is, when we are ready to practice the teaching; the faults of food need to be recognized. Once we understand the faults, there is another requirement for the proper method to practice, which is to contemplate. Later, it will tell us the correct way, so with how to practice reflection, it will not be covered yet. So, there are three faults mentioned here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 25.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P57, L11]***

**(1) *The fault that arises from the causes of enjoyment:*** Contemplate how any colorful, aromatic, and good-tasting food whatsoever appears like vomit once you have chewed it and moistened it with your saliva. **(2) *The fault that arises from digesting food:*** Contemplate how food produces such elements of the body as flesh and blood after it is digested in the middle or last period of the night. Contemplate how some food becomes feces and urine, and then remains in the lower part of the body; moreover, each day you have to excrete that.

Think how many kinds of illnesses develop in connection with this food. (3) *The five faults that come from looking for food:* The five are as follows:

1) *The fault of procurement:* While being tormented by heat and cold, you must make great effort in order to procure food and assemble its causes. If you do not procure it, you suffer sorrow and the like. Even if you do procure the food, you fear that it will be stolen or wasted, and then suffer because of taking great pains to guard it.

2) *The fault of ruining close relationships:* Even close relatives, such as fathers and sons, will dispute and fight with one another for the sake of food.

3) *The fault of insatiability:* Kings and the like will go to war with each other and experience much suffering when their craving for food intensifies.

4) *The fault of the lack of independence:* Those who eat others' food experience much suffering when they fight with opponents on behalf of their leader.

5) *The fault that arises from wrongdoing:* Having amassed sins of body, speech, and mind for the sake of food and its causes, you remember your sins when you are dying, and die with regret. Moreover, after death, you fall into a miserable realm.

Despite all of this, there is some benefit to food — after all, the body depends upon it. Eat your food after you think, “Since it is not correct to rely on food just for the sake of my body’s maintenance, I will conduct myself in a pure manner in dependence on my body’s

**maintenance. Benefactors and those who actually carry out acts of charity work so hard that their skin, flesh, and blood dry up! Then they make their gifts with a wish for a special result. I will ensure that their actions have great effects.” Remember as well that Santideva’s *Compendium of Trainings* says to eat while reflecting that (1) you are benefiting the giver; (2) whereas now you are assembling micro-organisms in your body through the material gift of food, in the future you will gather these beings together through the teachings; and (3) you will accomplish the welfare of all living beings. Also Nagarjuna’s *Friendly Letter* states:**

**With an understanding that food is like medicine,  
Eat it without hostility or attachment;  
Not for haughtiness, might,  
Or robustness, but only to maintain your body.**

I’ll just briefly read through it and won’t go into detailed explanation of the text. Regarding this portion, during the evening review session, it will be covered in more detail. Sincerely speaking, for those thinking of applying a remedy, the benefit is tremendous. However, in general, if we are serious about it, the explanation must be given in great detail. In fact, of course, we [monastics] should be able to apply this practice. However, since this [recorded teaching] will be shared with the public, it may not apply to many [laypeople]. Therefore, to have just a brief understanding: during our actual practice, the above is required, and this [explanation] should be sufficient. So, here, I just read the text briefly. Thus, as for the evening review session, there is one tomorrow.

**[*Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26A, 28.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P59, L5*]**

This is about the diet. In short, read it over carefully, earnestly read it. When covering each point, the text will tell us what to do.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P105; 26B, 29.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P61, L1]***

Next is about sleeping.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P106; 26B, 29.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P61, L2]***

**d) How to practice diligently without sleeping at the wrong time and how to act properly at the time of sleep**

Well, what do we do about sleep?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P106; 26B, 29.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P61, L4]***

**The *Friendly Letter*:**

**O Reasonable One, after cultivating virtue all day  
And in the first and last periods of the night as well,  
Sleep between these periods with mindfulness,  
Not wasting even the time of sleep.**

This is the principle, the basic concept. It says, “Reasonable One,” which is referring to those of us who are sincere practitioners, those truly endowed with virtuous roots. So for the entire day even at night – night includes the first and last periods of it. Do everything in the same manner, never slacking off. Even in the middle of the night, while asleep, there is also a proper method [to maintain the meditation]. Thus, the text says, “the time of sleep” – when you are sleeping during the middle period of the night, one

can still apply the practice instead of wasting it. How do we not waste the time when we sleep? “Sleep between these periods with mindfulness” – when sleeping, preserve the mindfulness. We will also read the text once.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P106; 26B, 01.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P62, L4]***

**“All day” and “the first and last periods of the night” both refer to what should be done during and between meditation sessions. Therefore, while sitting or standing, act purposefully, as I have explained before, by completely clearing your mind of the five obscurations.\***

[\*v.1 p.388 #171: excitement and regret, malice, lethargy and sleepiness, longing for desires, and doubt.]

Of course, daytime was covered earlier.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 01.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P62, L7]***

**There are teachings both for meditation sessions and for between meditation sessions with regard to restraining the sensory faculties and acting vigilantly, as well as this section on making effort to practice instead of sleeping.**

This was mentioned earlier.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 01.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P62, L9]***

**Therefore, here I have singled out those teachings for between sessions.**



For actual sleep, it has to be after meditation. So,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 01.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P62, L11]***

**Your conduct during sleep takes place between sessions, so do not treat even that as having no purpose.**

Now, here the text tells us, what should be done when we are sleeping?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 01.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P63, L1]***

**How should you sleep? During the day and in the first of the three portions of the night, spend your time doing virtuous activities; then sleep when the middle portion arrives. For, by sleeping you will enhance those elements of the body which are benefited by sleep.**

Why? We should know that actual meditation still relies on the four physical elements [fire, earth, air, and water]. The physical form of the four elements truly requires various methods to protect and enhance. Sleep is necessary for protection and enhancement, so sleep is needed! For us beginners to engage in “constantly sitting in meditation without lying down to sleep,” this is wrong. Once you have achieved a certain level, of course lying down to sleep is not needed, that would be the time for this practice. Strictly speaking, up to what point is normal sleep not needed? It is after the attainment of meditative serenity. Because of meditative serenity, which is after meditative equipoise has been achieved, both the body and mind are transformed. Once your four elements have transformed to concord with

the object of meditation, you won't need to sleep. For us beginners, if we are to force it, then the mistake will always be there. What mistake? You are just learning the appearance [of the practice], just like an embroidered pillow – the inside looks messy! This is the point. However, the Zen center requires [continuous sitting], and they have their reasoning. In a serious Zen center, they have their specific reasons.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 0.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P63, L11]***

So here, I recall there was a master in the past, a great master, who meditated in a sitting posture constantly. I am not sure how many years he did this for, I forgot. But he was so sleepy and did not know what to do, constantly felt sleepy in any situation. Then he said, "I really can't keep up with it!" So he went to another center, arrived there and slept. After he slept for a long time, he woke up fully charged with energy. He said, "Ah! So practicing meditation does need to sleep." Then he was invigorated and attained achievements! This was in the stories collected from the great master Venerable Lian-Chi. What is this book called? Well, I can't remember it all of a sudden. His story mentions: that if you are serious about applying the constantly sitting in meditation without lying down to sleep, study it carefully. Take a good look at this book! For the book clearly reveals it just as is. So we should often recognize that sleep is necessary. However, do not overdo or indulge in it. Once you indulge in it, then it's hopeless! So this is about the middle portion of the night.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 04.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P64, L4]***

**When you develop the body in that way, your body will be most serviceable for employment in both kinds of joyous perseverance\* in the group of virtues, and this also will be helpful.**

[\*v.1 p.388 #172:1. Joyous perseverance of constant practice. 2. Taking delight in it and making intense effort.]

Well, this concept tells us: because the body has been enhanced through the process of sleeping, it is well kept. Then you are fully charged with energy. So at this time, your energy in practicing the teaching can be generated. This is when your practice will be more powerful, and thus becomes “serviceable for employment.” Because of this power, the benefit is great. I have seen too many who have tried to practice constantly sitting in meditation without lying down to sleep – they don’t sleep at night yet doze off during the day – and they can’t muster any energy to do anything. Alas! Doing anything... just like that. To stand there and be dull-witted, one may be barely able to get by. But once you ask him to put in more effort – to listen to a sutra or to try something else – one gets sleepy. So why bother with the constant sitting in meditation without lying down to sleep? Really! So this is a mistaken approach. This is something we should recognize right from the beginning.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 05.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P64, L11]***

Here the author is telling us about joyous perseverance. Later in the chapter on the perfection of joyous perseverance [v.2 Chapter 13], he will explain this in great detail. What is the key issue here? The first one is you should not indulge in it. As for the second, while sleeping, there is a proper method, so it will definitely not be wasted. Like the previous example, if one does not have skill-in-

means in practicing constantly sitting in meditation without lying down to sleep, not only will you waste the night, but the day will be wasted as well! You wasted the time for you to sleep; moreover, you are not mindful of the correct view. You lack the energy to engage in things during the day, and you are not able to do it. How wrong can this be! Thus, that is a sign of lacking skill-in-means. You only learn from the appearances – such learning is making mistakes, and this is the concept! Now it reveals to us about what to do when we actually sleep.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 06.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P65, L3]***

**When you go to sleep, first come out from the meditation room, wash your feet, and then enter your own room. Then, lying on your right side, place your left leg upon the right, and sleep like a lion.**

First, at time of sleep, you should wash your feet. Here now, we are different from India. In India, people were often barefoot. So naturally, they washed their feet before going to bed. We wear shoes here, and certainly, it is necessary to take a bath in the summer, but in the winter it is optional [to take bath everyday]. Then, go to bed. When sleeping, we all know this is about the auspicious posture to sleep in. Why do we need to do this?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 06.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P65, L8]***

**As for sleeping like a lion, among all animals it is the lion who uses superior capacity, confidence, and fortitude to subdue its opponents.**

The reason for doing this is that a lion sleeps like this. That is when one is with “superior capacity.” This superior capacity does not refer to the position of the mind being high or low. That is when the mind is not too lax. If it is too lax, the mind will not be serviceable, just like that. So that is where we need to maintain the level of mindfulness and stabilization. What benefits does this have? One won’t be subdued by opponents, rather have the “fortitude to subdue its opponents.” What are we subdued by now? Subdued by the afflictions. If you can abide by this – that is, during the time of sleep you are still able to subdue afflictions – this is the special quality [of sleeping like a lion].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 07.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P66, L1]***

**Likewise, one who joyously perseveres at practice instead of sleeping will use superior capacity, etc. to subdue opponents and will, at rest, sleep like a lion.**

So now we are studying the method to sleep. At the same time, it is necessary to maintain this superior capacity when sleeping to subdue [afflictions]. Thus, this study is required.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 07.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P66, L4]***

**This is unlike the sleep of hungry ghosts, deities, or those who are involved in desire,**

Well, other than the lion, no beings sleep like this.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 07.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P66, L6]***

**for they all have laziness, weak perseverance, and little capacity to subdue opponents.\***

[\*v.1 p.388 #173]

Because what are all other beings? They are in the midst of laxity. However, there is an advantage to being lazy – comfort. Ah! How comfortable it is! So we should understand why we are here, do not pay a big price for the short-term immediate comfort. We should pursue great comfort, peerless and perfect comfort. That is when we pay extra principal, for [peerless comfort] is our ultimate purpose. Therefore, “One who does not have far-reaching goals will be bothered by immediate petty things.” Most ordinary worldly people will be attached to small comforts. Now if we study Buddha Dharma without this conceptual clarification, it is harming ourselves. The greatest harm done to the self is none other than this. No one else can help us, and Buddha cannot help us either. We only see the small aspect –not that considering the pros and cons are not needed, this point we should recognize. Thus, don’t fall for laziness over small advantages. For the sake of great benefits, one is inspired with joyous perseverance. Although there is hardship for now, ultimate benefit is in the future.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 09.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P67, L1]***

**From another point of view sleeping on your right side like a lion means that your body naturally does not become limp. Even when you have fallen asleep, you do not lose your mindfulness. Your sleep does not become heavy. You do not have bad or sinful dreams.**

Other than this, the nature of the Dharma characteristic of this sleeping like a lion is such – it allows our bodies not

to be limp. Once they are limp, then laziness, etc. will follow, that is how it works. At that time, you can maintain, maintain what? Maintain the momentum of joyous perseverance. This has its specific characteristics. So, with regard to comfort: if [you] speak of comfort, then [sleep like a lion] is not comfortable. However, for meditation, it is the best way. This applies to every aspect. It is the same with our food: indulge in comfort to better suit your taste – give you whatever you want, like that. This applies to everything! Then, [your] sleep will not be very deep so [your] nonvirtuous thoughts will be reduced. Also, the sleep won't be heavy and will be free from nightmares. These are all things that ordinary worldly people don't need to tend to, yet required for practitioners.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 10.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P67, L10]***

**But if you should sleep in some other way, all the faults that are the opposite of these four will arise.**

If you do not abide by it and practice the exact opposite, then all the faults will arise from here. Other than the method for sleep, next let's continue:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 10.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P67, L13]***

**There are four kinds of thoughts with which to fall asleep:**

Well then in this condition, since we sleep in this manner, thus we are able to develop the great power to use our minds. By then, what should the mind be doing? Four things:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 10.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P68, L3]***

***(1) The idea of illumination:***

First is the idea of illumination.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 10.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P68, L5]***

**First apprehend an image of light, and then sleep while imagining light. Thereby, when you fall asleep, darkness will not arise in your mind.**

This is the first one. In your mind, first, imagine a light. Most of the time, when we go to sleep, we prefer it to be dark. If it is dark, this makes us lethargic, lax, and dull-witted. Now think of light. If you can truly think of it in this way, well, this is wondrous beyond words. Later, when your practice reaches a certain level, you will discover, hey, this is superb! The nature of the light of the mind is just like this. Last time when I talked to you about the story of Venerable Shu-yun\*, where somebody came from behind “Pow!” and grabbed him: “What are you doing?” “Looking at the moon.” The meaning refers to the light of the nature of [Venerable Shu-yun’s] mind. At the causal stage, we must practice this. Later, the benefit will arise, and there is no need to go over it now.

[\*Venerable Shu-yun was a great Chinese Zen Master who passed away on October 13, 1959, at age 120.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 11.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P68, L12]***



**(2) *Mindfulness*: This arises from having heard, thought, and meditated on meaningful, virtuous teachings. Pursue this practice until you have fallen asleep. By this means, even when you are asleep, your mind will continue to engage the teachings, just as though you were not asleep. In short, you will sustain your virtuous practice even when you are asleep.**

What should you do with your mind? At that time - the previous one was the idea of illumination - this second one is about your thoughts. Usually, when we fall asleep, we let go and do not think of anything. Now it is not like that. We still need to continue with our study, reflection, and meditation. Continue to reflect, be mindful of the virtuous teachings that we studied during the day. Then continue to maintain it mindfully. If you can do so, well, there will be a certain state. If we truly are able to do so, usually when we can't sleep, if you lie down there and continue to think, of course, you will not fall asleep. But there is an advantage – you might give it a try. If you can really think, and think like this, in the end, you will still fall asleep. Once asleep - such a wonderful state - the mindfulness remains and is very clear. You give it a try!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 12.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P69, L8]***

But as for trying, it may not be appropriate for our environment. When is the best time? For example, when we have days off or some extra time, you can try to take one day off and give it a try. Sometimes, taking one day off is not enough. This is my experience to share with you. I often set aside a period of time each year, and during this period I will try this approach. I lie down on the bed for the first two days, thinking of things left and right, unable to sleep. Ignore it; I

just stop worrying about it. Gradually, gradually, the mind is lifted. No matter what, I maintain this mindfulness, lie down and think, think, think, think.... However, wandering thoughts will not work! Such a way of thinking will not help you, for these wild thoughts disturb your consciousness, which is not good for your health either. When your mindfulness is focused, both your body and mind become very steady, just like that. Thus, your body and mind are in a state of stability. Moreover, sleeplessness will not be a concern, you are not anxious at all. Eventually, you fall asleep. Once you fall asleep, the mindset still remains. This is very interesting! If you are chanting Buddha's name, then it is absolutely true; before you sleep, try to chant vigorously. After that, lie down to relax. Then you maintain that mental momentum: good! Let it continue. If it fades out, pick it up, fades out then pick it up. In a relaxed manner, just like that. Later, you would feel that you have fallen asleep. No...after you fall asleep then you sense it, but during sleep, the recitation of Buddha's name remains. It is as clear as it can be, such greatness. By the time you get up in the morning, hey, your energy will be better than if you had been in a deep sleep. This is an absolute fact that I am sharing with you.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 14.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P70, L7]***

So in aspects like this, if you are only looking at the words, it is of no use. For you to actually meditate, [you] have to work hard at it. Once [you] strive with effort, all kinds of benefits will arise, you will realize it at that time. Alas, I often feel even if I have to work ten times harder, I am more than willing to endure it. This [hard work] is nothing! At that time, the true Dharma joy is real. That [Dharma joy] is only a tiny bit, at the very minimum, I am telling you [from my

experience]. There is also one benefit. When your efforts have paid off, the experience will arise. Ah, the feeling of the harvest is so nice! At this time, your will becomes stronger and stronger. Subsequently, your vigor becomes stronger and stronger. Thus, the stronger the will is, the more vigorous you become. When you have to practice more profound teachings, it will not be difficult to you anymore. Now because we are not engaging [mindfully] yet, we can't even achieve any of it. Alas, when we look at how to become Buddha and Bodhisattva, it is so difficult! Alas, goodness Nammo Amitabha Buddha! How can you achieve the practice? So it specifically says here, although it is difficult, if you are willing, try it. At that time you will feel, ah! How wonderful.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 15.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P70, L15]***

“Vigilance”, next is about “thought.” In other words, it is mindfulness. The first is the idea of illumination. The second is how to maintain mindfulness. Next:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 15.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P71, L2]***

**(3) Vigilance: While you cultivate mindfulness in this way, any of the afflictions could arise. If any of them does, you notice it and eliminate it rather than acquiesce to it.**

Well! When sleeping, one more thing you need to preserve – “vigilance.” This is related to your thoughts, related to mindfulness. Also, when you are sleeping, your mind should think: I want to do this, I have to do this, need to do this! Then, with this mind state, as you sleep, when

afflictions arise, one needs to have the ability to eliminate them. Well? For this point, perhaps the majority of us may not necessarily understand it. Now I will share this with you as well. For example, usually when you go to sleep, all the way until you get up the next morning, hear the knocking of the [wakeup] board, “Ah! Why is knocking of the board so early? Let me go back to sleep for a few more minutes!” You will have this thought. Or perhaps, “It’s ok! It’s still early, I will wait until the knock of the third round to get up.” Moreover, “It will not be too late to get up when I hear the drum!” We often have this kind of mentality. Why is that? It is due to a lack of vigilance ahead of time, and then affliction follows. This is very obvious! So what should be done? Prior to sleep, one first thinks this way: “I need to apply joyous perseverance! I need to apply joyous perseverance! In the past, I was influenced by affliction.” Is this alone enough? Not enough! [The author] tells us to “repeatedly reflect” – you continuously have this thought. When you lie down to sleep, thinking tomorrow I am determined to do so! So this sign of application is very clear! After this reflection, you let go and sleep. By the next morning, when you get up, upon hearing the knocking of the board, you will “Thump!” and sit up! Give it a try, I guarantee it will work.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 16.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P72, L1]***

So once you have this thought, you may still have dreams. For instance, often we have afflictions arise in our dreams. Then if you can maintain mindfulness, well, even if afflictions arise in your dreams, you can still block them. You can even hinder it in your dreams! So, for sleeping, there is absolutely a proper method that can be applied. Now we often think, “Alas! Now I wish for this and that!” To reach the goal, there is a proper method and cause – they are all

revealed to you here. As long as you abide by it, you will attain all your genuine aspirations.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P107; 26B, 17.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P72, L6]***

**(4) *The idea of rising:* This has three aspects.**

For vigilance, this concept has three aspects.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 17.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P72, L8]***

**First, do not let the mind slip into a state of being completely overwhelmed by sleep.**

The first aspect is like this.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 17.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P72, L10]***

**Instead, sleep very lightly like a deer with a mind imbued with joyous perseverance. This will prevent heavy sleep, and you will be able to awaken without oversleeping.**

The first one, when you reflect on it this one should be included. Do not be completely overcome by sleep. One needs to have “a mind imbued with joyous perseverance” – have this mentality. Like a wounded deer, a wounded deer is always on high alert. As for a deer, often wherever it goes – usually many animals would eat whatever food they see. But not a deer – in the forest, everywhere it goes, it will stop and look around. If you have noticed the ears of the deer, they rotate around and around. It has to observe for some

time to see if there is anything that might cause harm. Then, it will eat. This is under normal circumstances. Once [a deer] is wounded, it is even more alert! Our mind has to be like this. If you can do so, then the sleep will not be heavy, and will not oversleep. Actually, what does this mean? That is, prior to your actual thought, well, normally when we go to sleep, one will think, “Well, time to go to bed. When I’m already in bed, what need is there to think!” This is not helpful! So in the case of not being overcome by sleep, this is the first aspect. Well, you should ... I want to apply joyous perseverance, to strive hard at it. And then encourage your mind to practice. Instead of being surrounded by afflictions, revolve around joyous perseverance.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 19.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P73, L9]***

**Second, think, “Ah, I will always practice staying awake as the Buddha taught,” and then with great effort develop an aspiration to this end. With this, your sleep will not deviate from the sleep of a lion, which the Buddha permitted.**

The second aspect is to ask yourself: what am I here for? Oh, I am here to learn Buddha Dharma. So what did Buddha tell us to do? It is to do so and so – therefore, I strive at it. “With great effort, develop an aspiration to this end,” this is the key to success or failure. He did not tell you to engage in it right away. Before that, you first need to think: well, what is the advantage of doing so, and what are the faults of not doing it. So I might as well remind myself constantly with this: “What am I here for?” First, I am here to learn from Buddha. Oh! Then what did Buddha tell us to do? Thus, there are various approaches. Well! So there are great advantages to practice accordingly. There will be great

disadvantages for not abiding by it. Thus, from this motivating force, go deeper into the teachings one step at a time.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 20.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P74, L3]***

**Third, think, “Just as I joyously persevered at cultivating virtue and not sleeping today, I will do the same tomorrow as well.” This will prevent breaking the continuity of your aspiration to cultivate virtue. Even if you forget your aspiration, always work to make it stronger.**

Well! Reflect in this way: I am practicing like this now, notice, not only is it in the daytime but also practicing virtuous teachings when asleep at night! Today is like this and so is tomorrow. Because you continuously reflect in this way, therefore your mind – your mentality, this mentality of aspiring for virtue – this mental momentum continues. What is the benefit of this thought process? In our minds now, the thoughts that align with ignorance are eliminated, removed. In this situation, because your thoughts conform to virtue, even though you are not mindful and you have forgotten about it, the momentum of applying the teaching is still at work. What about us now? This requires a contrast to help our understanding. Because we have not yet officially studied this content, often the mind follows afflictions, circling around the afflictions. Just like that. One doesn't even know what one is afflicted by, just like that. Ah, the feeling is agitating either sitting or standing. There are times, when it seems like there is some improvement, wow, the feeling is very good! Actually, this “very good” is also when the coarse afflictions are not emerging. In this circumstance, only by upholding your mindfulness can you barely get by.

Once the mindfulness disappears, one will certainly be surrounded by afflictions again.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 21.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P75, L1]***

Why is it that most of the time we cannot accord to it? That is because our continuum is in the midst of afflictions. Since submerging in the continuum of afflictions, of course, whatever your [mind] can generate is all conforming to afflictions. Now, this physical and mental continuum of yours is inspired by virtue. With this mentality of virtuous aspiration, your innermost thoughts will therefore always follow virtue. Because of this, even if you are not mindful while sleeping, the virtuous momentum is still moving forward. Normally when we talk about seeking for precepts and attaining the essence of the vows, we are specifically talking about this [virtuous mental continuum]. In the future, during the actual session of this topic, the text will tell us clearly and specifically. Therefore, even if one is not mindful, well! He can still strive at it, and engage in a higher level of joyous perseverance. May [I] ask, even when we are not mindful, we can cultivate a higher level of joyous perseverance. Then, when you are being mindful, how can the practice not take place? So the issue [of advancement] is resolved! Thus,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 22.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P75, L9]***

**Conducting yourself in this way while eating and sleeping involves no misdeeds. Since acting purposefully in this manner will clearly stop you from wasting so much of your life,**



If you maintain no misdeeds while eating and sleeping, and you can precisely abide by the teaching, your application with such meaningful attitude, ah, that would be wonderful! We clearly look at what is in front of us now, various meaningless things can be prevented, and this is very obvious. With our routine sleeping and eating, ah! All are about increasing misdeeds, which is totally without purpose. Our entire life is casually squandered. By applying this [mindfulness] accordingly, all of these [teachings] can be very useful.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 23.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P75, L14]***

**I have explained it as the noble Asanga, citing sutra, determined it to be.**

So the text is based on the commentary of the Bodhisattva Asanga, which is validated. That is to say, it has been analyzed very thoroughly. Just clarifying it here for everyone.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 23.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P76, L3]***

**Everything that I have said here about how to act before, during, after, and between sessions applies to all of the meditations described from here through and including the section on insight. The only exceptions are the distinctive meditative procedures during the actual sessions.**

Well! Now it says, during the actual session, your object of meditation may be distinctive. What is distinctive? It is your specific object – if I recite the name of Amitabha

Buddha, yes! So my object of meditation is Amitabha Buddha. If I recite Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, then it is Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. Or perhaps I am here trying to deliberate “What is your true self?” These are unique to each individual - distinctive. Other than this, the aforementioned preparation, actual session, and conclusion, as well as in between sessions, that is to say, other than the actual meditation session, all the things we need to do are included in the in-between times. Practice all of them accordingly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 24.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P76, L10]***

Now let’s think about it, if you are able to abide by it, will you still have non-virtuous karma? No more. If you can do this, will there be a shortage of virtuous karma? Of course, you will constantly be in the midst of virtuous deeds, great! Also, what will these virtuous deeds generate? The continuous effect is always there, continues to appear and manifest! We will know in the future when you are truly facing life and death, what prompts you into the next life? That is the last thought at one’s final moment, which will lead us to the next life.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 25.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P77, L1]***

As for us now, our entire mentality is submerged in afflictions – filled with afflictions. This is why, even if you recite Buddha’s name, the mouth is reciting Buddha’s name but the mind still concords with afflictions. While one has energy and is able to be mindful, yet one cannot apply it. In the final moment facing the suffering of sickness – with so much pain, can you be mindful? So, at that time, even if you

put a big speaker next to your ear that plays the chanting of Buddha's name, it is of no help to you. You will think, "Alas, I am in such pain, why are you bothering me with such noise!" This is absolutely true!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 25.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P77, L6]***

It does not have to be at the final moment. Even now, in the present moment – for instance, when [we] are still energetic, all of a sudden you are asked to take care of something, alas! To do it is so much trouble! This is how our minds work, needless to say when we are sick! That is how it is. So when you actually engage in it gradually, by then, one will be able to adapt to it. What does this rely on? It relies on our present strength and health. The key concept is right at this moment, never count on the petty cleverness while we happen to be healthy and do harm to ourselves! When protecting this enemy from beginningless time – protecting this "I" – you have wronged! You protect it, then, after cultivating for so long, this "I" inflates more and more, becomes bigger and bigger! This "I" is the root of cyclic existence. So the author taught us earlier that these four preconditions have been clearly explained.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P108; 26B, 26.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P77, L13]***

**This concludes the explanation of what to do in between sessions.**

After the actual session, what do we do in between sessions? Well! The dual practice of both the actual and in between sessions; the text tells us that both of them complement each other, isn't it beautiful? Ah, I think that is

truly great! This is the principle. Based on this principle, no matter what you do, it will be 100% free of loopholes, completely without omission. That is a brief explanation for us, just a brief one, only a general explanation for us! But there are definitely subtler details. All of the following sections will tell us the true contents of the preceding covered outline. So if you are endowed with the qualified conditions, by hearing the earlier sections, you already know how to practice and become able to achieve it. If we are not ready, very sorry – while hearing it but do not have proper comprehension – then continue with earnest study. The author will tell us clearly in every aspect, just like that. Once you understand it, [your] meditation will certainly be successful.

**CHAPTER 6:  
REFUTING  
MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT  
MEDITATION**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 26B, 27.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P78, L7]***

## **b. Refuting misconceptions about meditation**

Ah! This is very important, very important! Nowadays too many of us do not understand the true content of meditation. Ah! We think we are meditating, but, unknowingly, we are doing it wrong. This is the greatest pity, the greatest loss! So this misconception needs to be refuted and eliminated, do away with it!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P81, L1]***

With the things we just mentioned earlier, even with examples such as our dieting habits, in the previous examples, we can casually contemplate them. The question is not how hard it is to transform, but that we cannot eliminate our misconceived discernment. If you don't eliminate this concept, then whatever you do, the feeling of having been mistreated will always be there and, by then, not much can be done to help you. So many aspects in Buddha's sutras, we learn that if you don't properly uphold ethical discipline, when the vows are transgressed, it is possible to mend it. These two aspects: first and the

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second, my Mandarin is not perfect. The first one is the ethical discipline, which is the precepts that we are upholding, and it is our sign of application. If you are not abiding it well, there is still hope. Needless to say, the Bodhisattvas can help, and we can even save ourselves. If the second conceptual “view” is not intact – in other words, you don’t have the correct view and you are attached to your erroneous view – then even if your sign of application is very good, downfall [to the miserable realms] is certain, this [sign of application] is of no use. So this is the key concept. Therefore, the wrongful discernment here is the mistake. Within all of Buddha Dharma, this is what we have to recognize very clearly. Thus, here, [the 2<sup>nd</sup>] one is totally wrong and the [1<sup>st</sup> one] is partially wrong and biased. Now let’s take a look:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 01.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P82, L1]***

**There are persons who have not begun to recognize that the classic scriptures and their commentaries constitute personal instructions, and who, therefore, might have the following qualm.**

It is said that some people, there are some – who are those people? The ones who are unable to recognize reality – what reality? It refers to what Buddha taught in the sutras – that is, the “classical scriptures” and what else? “Their commentaries,” the explanations. We may not understand the sutras, so we rely on the Bodhisattvas’ commentaries. All these sutras or commentaries, they are called “classic scriptures.” The classic scriptures teach us all the crucial points of how to apply the teachings; this is referred to as “personal instructions.” In other words, the methods for us to earnestly practice the teachings are all in the scriptures and commentaries. However, there are some people who don’t

understand this – those “who have not begun to recognize”, what do they say?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 02.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P82, L7]***

**Qualm: When you meditate on the path, you should do only stabilizing meditation rather than repeatedly analyzing your object of meditation,**

He [the one with erroneous perception] says, during an actual session, you shouldn't analyze, shouldn't reflect. What should be done then? Just apply stabilizing meditation. In other words, do not have any mental activity just be stable. Like what we often say, you should not discriminate, just like that. Where does this cause come from? The text explains:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 02.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P82, L10]***

**for repeated analysis with discerning wisdom is only for times of study and reflection.**

What is the interpretation in the text? What is the reason this qualm claims that you should not repeatedly analyze and stabilize your mind? This is saying analysis is during study and reflection. Now, at your actual meditation session, analysis is not necessary. This group of people holds this view and has this kind of discrimination. Actually, these people do not have an accurate understanding of the true content of the classic scriptures. This is the first section.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 03.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P83, L1]***



**Moreover, repeated analysis will prevent you from future attainment of buddhahood because conceptual thought apprehends signs of true existence.**

The qualm further says, “Now you are analyzing, this is conceptual discrimination, this discrimination is a kind of attachment. Well, I am studying Buddha Dharma; the attainment of Buddha’s ultimate enlightenment, and this ultimate enlightenment is free from conceptual discrimination! Now that you want to apply the teaching, if you have conceptual discrimination, wouldn’t it become an apprehension? So analysis is not needed.” Those who have this kind of argument are wrong! So, below, Lama Tsongkha-pa clarifies:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 04.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P83, L5]***

**Reply: This is the nonsensical chatter of someone who is utterly ignorant of the crucial points of practice,**

The above qualm comes from those who lack the proper understanding of the essential, the core points of meditation. It is an error, and it is a big one. A huge mistake! This is absolutely true. Now let us read on carefully. Regarding this misconception section, I will explain it in great detail. First, the author points out the mistake. He points out the error and then establishes the accurate view by quoting from the sutras and commentaries.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 04.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P83, L10]***

**for Maitreya’s *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* states:**

**Proper attention is based upon prior study.  
Sublime wisdom, which takes reality as its object,  
arises from your cultivation of proper attention.**

So below it explains, what is stated in the scriptures and commentaries?

**Here Maitreya teaches that you should use the wisdom that comes from reflection to attend properly to the meaning of what you have studied. From this there will arise the wisdom that comes from meditation and perceives reality.**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 04.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P83, L12]***

This part explains the text above. It is about what is it to meditate? Lama Tsong-Kha-Pa said it comes from the earlier teaching of “wisdom that comes from reflection.” What is the content of this reflection? “To attend properly to the meaning of what you have studied” is to reflect. What do you reflect on? What are you mindful of? The practice that is properly conforming to the teachings is called being mindful of the teachings. So where does this come from? From listening to “what you have studied.” Usually, what comes from our own thinking is not in concordance [to the teaching]. The proper perceptions have to be taught by virtuous teachers, and then you recognize them properly and analyze each arising thought: [virtuous teacher] said this is the way! And the reason why? For example, what we have just covered with the remedy for the food we eat. We often feel that being a human, what do we live for? Human life in this world is just for petty things like relationships with people of the opposite gender, eating, and enjoyment, that’s it. Now Buddha taught us differently – these are the causes of suffering, and that is the fact! With this understanding,

then we go about to reflect and analyze. Yes, it makes sense! By then, through your earnest reflection and applying all kinds of methods, this is called mindfully practicing the teaching – one will be mindful of whatever teaching was heard.

Then, once you have reflected on it, you will generate certainty within. Well, this is totally unmistakable, absolutely right! Just like what I told you earlier, you tried so hard to let go, which is truly impossible. Whereas if you fully abide by the teaching, thus, you actually let go of satisfying this mouth, which was so hard to let go. At that time, you feel pleased and joyous in your mind and you will form unwavering certainty in the mind toward the concepts that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have taught you.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 06.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P84, L9]***

At that time, your mind will dwell on the teaching and will be ready for further advancement. Of course, the wisdom arising from meditation described here is not that simple. All of this is the preparation for the conventional truth.\* What is the actual meditation here? For instance, we have to specifically emphasize the analysis of emptiness. So, in the tenet study sect, how does it teach us to analyze wisdom of emptiness? There are eight negations...\*\*

**[\*Conventional truth is the foundation to understand ultimate truth.**

**The former comprises the first pair of the 4 Noble Truths – the truth of suffering and origin of suffering. The latter comprises the 2<sup>nd</sup> pair of the 4 Noble Truths – cessation of suffering and path to cessation.**

**\*\*The eight negations 中觀八不: this is based on Nagarjuna's philosophy, and the eight are presented as pairs. No elimination 不生 – no production 不滅; no**

destruction 不斷 – no eternity 不常; no unity 不一 – not many 不異; no leaving 不去 – no coming 不來.

In Sanskrit, they are anirodham, anutpadam, anucchedam, asasvatam, anekartham, ananartham, anirgamam, anagamam.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 07.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P85, L1]***

“Listen well and thoroughly!” Listen well and reflect well. If [we] cannot make this happen, we may know a lot of teachings, but it does not help us very much, and it is of no help to others. We may plant a few virtuous roots but have harmed self and others, as well as damaged Buddha Dharma. With such understanding of Buddha Dharma, and we take the magic mirror that reveals goblins to focus on others’ shortcomings, specifically looking for others’ faults with one’s very high standard.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 08.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P85, L4]***

So remember! Once heard it, try one’s best to experience it on your own. So, up to now, what I want to explain is that before the foundation of the path [v.1 chapter 8], I will not demand too much from you. Because, even with a brief understanding of the concepts, [we are] still not quite clear on how to practice it to purify our mental stream. Once we start to learn purification, then we need to earnestly apply the practice. By then, gradually everyone should understand that when we seriously begin to cultivate, at that time the requirements should be more earnest. Now, everyone please turn to the Lamrim text [page 109], continuing...

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 08.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P85, L9]***

**for Maitreya's *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* states:**

**Proper attention is based upon prior study.**

**Sublime wisdom, which takes reality as its object, arises from your cultivation of proper attention.**

**[This section is repeated for emphasis.]**

Thus, the concepts were explained earlier. Below, it cites the scriptures and commentaries to validate these concepts. It is saying how do we go about meditation? There is a definite order for repeatedly and continuously reflect, assess, and analyze the part that one has properly understood. Then, with this proper understanding, where does the correct view arise? It arises from "wisdom that comes from reflection." This wisdom comes from the process of reflection and, once you have this proper understanding, analyze the object correspondingly, just like that. Then from where does this object arise? It arises from listening and studying. So if we accord with the sequence, first listen to understand the true nature of reality. This listening means one hears others' teachings. If you are able to understand what others have taught, then at that time ... These two are different. The first one is hearing, and the second is the wisdom that arises from hearing. You have understood what the teacher taught, he points his finger to show you the moon, and you see the moon instead of focusing on his finger. There is a great difference here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 10.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P86, L4]***

But even though you see it, because you are still in the midst of ignorance, as soon as you turn around, this ignorance appears again and you are again immersed in it.

So you have to continuously delve into deeper reflection and analysis. During the reflecting and analyzing, sometimes you feel that it is right; other times you may have doubts. So continuously reflect, reflect until you have reached certainty – assert without a doubt. That is “wisdom that comes from reflection.” This is what needs to be practiced while meditating.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 11.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P86, L8]***

Let me give an example. When we were in school, the teacher wrote a formula on the board, an equation. In the beginning, you didn't know what he was talking about. After a while, oh, got it, got it. That is, you understood the reasoning he was talking about. That is called “studying” what he is trying to show you. In Buddha Dharma, this is called “wisdom.” So, upon gaining an understanding, you go home and then work on the homework. Well, why is it that you understood during the class but, while working on the assignment, you don't understand it again? Well! This is the issue, so you reflect, repeatedly reflect, and continue to work on the assignment again, again, and again.

Sometimes it seems like you can solve the equations, while other times you can't. While working on them, sometimes it works out, but other times it doesn't. So you keep at it until the end, ah! It is solved. You then have a good idea of how it works. You practice on this equation – got it. This is wisdom arises from reflection. Once you know how to use this equation, you can apply it to other cases. That is how it works, and this is called meditation. This sequential order is required. Once you can apply meditation in this manner, then “sublime wisdom, which takes reality as its object, arises from your cultivation of proper attention.” At that time, true reality will arise.

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 12.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P87, L3]**

Up to this point, especially in China, we have a concept that the Zen and Tenet-teaching sects seem to be two separate paths. The expression: “Buddha’s unspoken teachings [teachings without words].”<sup>\*</sup> Especially for Zen practitioners, who usually think that the words are useless, and even regard the text as a thick forest of wrong views. The more views you have, the more obstacles you have, and conceptual knowledge hinders your enlightenment. Does this make sense? Yes, it is sensible, but the problem is not that the words are wrong. Instead, when you go down the path of study, reflection, and meditation, you are not doing it right. So we kept saying earlier that the original intent of the text is to reveal to you the content, which is wisdom. It is the wisdom that eliminates your afflictions. Whereas you understood the text but were unable to resolve your afflictions and your defilements increased. Isn’t this growing your thick forest of wrong views? Nowadays, this is evident everywhere, as small as a tiny rule that everyone quarrels over. “Yours is not right, I am right!” Everyone tries to frame others with this “I” to force others to accept. Once you hear something is wrong, alas! You feel that he is playing the Dharma instrument incorrectly; it should be played this way. The Dharma instrument is meant to discipline us, to eliminate our afflictions, yet here it is being applied erroneously. This is why the ancient masters said out of compassion, “You have wronged!” The true meaning of study and contemplation is very important. Everyone must be clear with this concept, this is very important!

**[\*不立文字,教外別傳,直指人心,見性成佛: In Chinese, this explains that Buddha’s teaching was given without spoken words to avoid unnecessary reflection that may hinder enlightenment]**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 14.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P87, L13]***

I have always stressed this here. In the beginning, I try not to demand too much of you because I have not clearly explained the correct view and you should listen to this with great earnestness. However, if the result of you listening to the teaching leads to more grasping, very sorry! You have taken a completely wrong turn. You cannot even purify yourself, how can you help others? What is the use of your demands of others? Therefore, there is a story in the *Sutra Unraveling the Intended Meaning* [v.1 p.272]. A few Bodhisattvas were arguing, he says he is right and you say you are right. After arguing for a while, alas! It's wrong, both are wrong! Now the author is talking about the principles, and we aren't even at the level of this discussion, this must be clarified. Therefore, it is not the fault of the teachings, but that we the students have misunderstood the meaning. Our learning is at fault. By the time we teach others, of course, it will be wrong as well. This is the cause.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 14.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P88, L5]***

In fact, the sequence is very clear. So once you understand the content, you will recognize that the Tenet-teaching and Zen sect are exactly the same, completely the same. So this concept, by the time we reach the end of the text, I will slightly point it out and you all would understand. Because, in this beginning section, we lack the understanding of many fundamental perceptions, not everyone will be able to readily accept it when I explain it.



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 15.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P88, L9]***

So, here all we have to know is this “meditation” must go through study. Once one has the proper wisdom that arises from the study, then reflect on it. If you are able to understand this and have an understanding of the correct meaning that has been taught, abide by this accurate teaching to reflect, assess, analyze, and practice. By then, “reality,” this reality\* is what we refer to as the equipoise that directly perceives the ultimate truth [v.3 p.258] or nonconceptual sublime wisdom [v.3 p.344], just like that. Then once one has it, continue with one’s meditation to attain the post-nonconceptual sublime wisdom. This is the necessary sequence. Next, it continues:

**[\*In general, the stages to reach the understanding of Reality are: equipoise that directly perceives the ultimate truth □ nonconceptual sublime wisdom □ post-nonconceptual sublime wisdom.]**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 15.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P88, L14]***

**Therefore, first study with someone what you intend to practice, and come to know it secondhand.**

This is the first, so during your actual practice, first, one must learn from others. Thus, at this time, it is totally relying on others – “come to know it secondhand [with certainty].” This refers to the meaning of what he taught, and you understood it with certainty. This is really important. That is why I wrote on the board, “listen well and thoroughly!” If you cannot do this correctly, after he has taught for a while, you end up failing the assigned task. If this is not done correctly, he points at the moon to show you, but you only see his

finger. You have completely missed the point of the teaching. You take the finger as the moon, how absurd is this? So be aware of this point, one has to know it secondhand and develop certainty through it. Next,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 16.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P89, L7]***

**Next, use scripture and reasoning to properly reflect on the meaning of what you have studied, coming to know it firsthand.**

Well then, based on our understanding of what he taught, then reflect and analyze the meaning of it. This is actually the true and accurate intent of the sublime teaching, just like that. Perhaps you understand it immediately upon hearing it, and that is good. Perhaps you didn't understand then ask those around you or even confer with your virtuous teacher, and widely study various scriptures and commentaries. After repeatedly reviewing and reflecting, one generates this unwavering acknowledgment, ah! With regard to the reasoning that he taught, I finally understood it thoroughly – I have complete understanding. This is “coming to know it firsthand,” developing complete faith toward teacher's teaching.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P109; 27A, 17.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P88, L13]***

**Once you determine the meaning of what you originally intended to practice with this kind of study and reflection and you have no doubts, then familiarize yourself with it repeatedly. We call this repeated familiarization “meditation.”**

Thus, this is “meditation.” Because of your previous study and reflection, upon ascertaining his true meaning, then you are continuously meditating accordingly. Because of our previous conformity to ignorance, our mental stream is contaminated and constantly submerged in such momentum. So even you have understood this, you still have to strive continuously to abide by it and this is known as meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 18.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P90, L4]***

Previously, the text taught us, what is meditation? It is repeatedly analyzing and focusing one’s mind on a virtuous object. In the same way, at this point, we also understand that although we may know a theory, yet we are unable to accomplish it. Why? Even though we understood it, however with our current mental activity – it can be stated as our immediate consciousness, or we can say it is the subjective aspect of our minds, or we can say it is our present mental process. What is this mental process? It conforms to the beginningless afflictions. The views that arise are afflictive-views and the propensities are afflictive-sentiments. For those flashing thoughts that was just heard, it has long since been lost, who knows where it is now. Thus, when a given object arises, it is concordant with our contaminated latent propensities. [Upon identifying as such,] that is when it can be called meditation. Constantly keep this in mind and reflect on it, and you will gradually and gradually gain a bit more understanding and increase it bit by bit.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 19.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P90, L11]***

So, I was with everyone the other night, sharing [some experience] with you all. It was in the evening, right? I shared my experience with you. Or was it during the day? I cannot remember. That is, if you understand this reasoning, you first have to reflect and analyze ahead of time, then you incorporate this accurate reasoning to work in your mind. For example, now I feel that thinking about the harm that the food I eat does to me, then the more I think about it, the more I feel that it has really harmed me since beginningless time! You uphold this reasoning all the way to the kitchen. Upon seeing the food in the kitchen, you would say, “Good gracious! You are my foe of cyclic existence. I finally recognize you today, and will remember you in my mind.” Then you are able to block [the attachment to food]. What is this called? Well, this is repeated familiarization. These few statements [in the text] actually are the essence for our practice of meditation. Often, we always feel that by looking at it, ah, I got it, understood it! Then, when we start to teach others out there, goodness Amitabha Buddha! This is how we are now. So here this is especially important, this is specifically known as meditation. Once we have this understanding, then,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 21.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P91, L5]***

**Thus, you need both repeated analytical meditation and nonanalytical stabilizing meditation,**

So, during the actual meditation session, we need both analytical and stabilizing meditation. Stabilizing meditation is not to think about the discerning and reflecting, etc. Both are required and needed. Later, the author will cover this in detail. Because, earlier, the misconception says that when you meditate you do not need to reflect or analyze, here it

teaches us differently. Both are needed, both are required. Let's continue, the author tells us when to apply which one - when to apply what. In other words, when to apply reflection and analysis, and when to apply stabilization – the author clarifies each in great detail. Continuing with the text,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 21.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P91, L11]***

**because meditation involves both nonanalytical stabilization on the meaning of what you originally intended to practice that was determined through study and reflection and the use of discerning wisdom to analyze this meaning.**

Because the sequence of our meditation is beginning from study then reflecting, when we apply the accurate meaning that has been determined through study and reflection, in fact, both kinds are required. There is a kind where you don't need to analyze and reflect, just abide on the object – this is known as stabilizing meditation. The other requires your reflection and analysis of the content. Repeatedly practice [both] in meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 22.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P92, L1]***

**Therefore, to claim that all meditations are stabilizing meditations is like taking one grain of barley and saying, “This is all the barley grains there are.”**

Therefore, some say that, during meditation, only stabilization is required and you don't need to discern anything. That is the same as taking one grain of barley and claiming that all grains are the same. This is a mistake.

Holding a grain of barley and claiming that it is the only grain, may I ask, is rice a grain? Is sorghum a grain? Based on a similar concept, in order for us to easily understand, I might as well say, “I am a sentient being.” Of course, I am a sentient being; there is no way to mistake this. “Thus, all sentient beings are me” – is this statement correct? If you don’t think about it, [it could be] right! But, if you think about it, then something is not right. I am certainly a sentient being. However, the opposite of it, sentient beings are me, then what about you folks? You are not sentient beings, so you are all logs! Something is wrong with this statement and it is questionable. This we have to know.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 23.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P92, L8]***

While practicing the teachings we should understand, never cover up the broader meaning with a narrow definition. This is absolutely a great mistake. The true intent of studying Buddha Dharma is to resolve all sentient beings’ problems. Beings are infinite, the latent propensity is infinite, and thus the teachings that need to be studied are infinite. As for an individual, there are still many teachings that need to be learned. Now, you grasp on one and forsake all of the other approaches, this is not permissible. We definitely should not say that I take cold medicine, and it is a cure for everything. You take cold medicine when you have a cold, and if you take it for lung disease or for AIDS, wouldn’t that be a joke? Now, our problem is right here. This point we should definitely pay attention to, pay absolute attention!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 25.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P93, L1]***

**Moreover, just as study must precede the wisdom that comes from study, and reflection must precede the wisdom that comes from reflection, so too meditation must precede the wisdom that comes from meditation.**

Next, it says that wisdom from study comes from study. This was discussed earlier. Truthfully speaking, the systematic order is very clear. To put it simply – study, reflect and meditate. Actually, wisdom that comes from study arises from study, right? So what is the author saying about your wisdom that comes from study? “Study must precede” – you first have to hear it before you can attain the wisdom from study. If you don’t listen now, then may I ask, can you attain it? This is the first aspect. Then, with wisdom from reflection, “reflection must precede” – you have to first reflect and analyze. Once you have reflected and analyzed, then you think, “Oh, I got it, I got it.” It is very much like solving a quiz – you have to work at it! Even though the teacher explained it, once you understand, if you don’t practice it, sorry! It will not help you, this is very important. Similarly, “meditation must precede the wisdom from meditation” – at the time of meditation, you have to work hard at it. The systematic order is such.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 26.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P93, L10]***

**As this is so, meditation means becoming familiar with what you have ascertained using the wisdom that comes from reflection. Therefore, it is said that the wisdom that comes from meditation is a product of the wisdom that comes from reflection.**

So the order mentioned earlier is to study first, followed by wisdom that comes from studying; reflect then followed

by wisdom that comes from reflection, and meditate then followed by wisdom that comes from meditation. So now we refer to “wisdom that comes from meditation” – the prerequisite is meditation. Then what comes before meditation? Meditation is to apply the preceding wisdom that arises from reflection – through your reflection and becoming certain with your understanding, “oh, so this is the true nature of reality!” However, your latent propensity is not like this. Then what is the state of your habits? Now the teaching taught us luminosity. It explains the state of being “luminescent,” or the true nature of reality seen by wisdom, appears in such a way. We have been ignorant and foolish, ah, now we understand. At that time, you have to change to transform from your usual ignorant, foolish latent propensity to abide by your wisdom that arises from reflection now, as the guideline to improve and transform. At this time, you will advance step-by-step, and when wisdom from meditation arises, you will attain the true object of meditation. Now is it clear? This concept is very clear! Now we are all like this, talking about meditation, I am going to meditate. So I close the door and sit cross-legged in the mountain. In the end, the legs become sore from sitting, but there is no sign of achievement. This is the concept. We should recognize the certainty of the order has to be this way. Because of this,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27A, 28.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P94, L7]***

**Thus, the depth of the wisdom that comes from your studies is commensurate with your studies. The breadth of your reflection is commensurate with this wisdom, while the depth of the wisdom that comes from your reflections is proportionate to your reflections. The magnitude of your practice of meditation corresponds to the depth of your wisdom of reflection, while your**



## **ability to stop faults and achieve good qualities is commensurate with your practice of meditation.**

This order is very clear, because of this, so you realize the required order. Thus now it says, oh, it all starts from study. Because it begins from study, however much you have studied, taking your study as the prerequisite, you will be able to attain however much wisdom that arises from study. Because you have much wisdom that arises from study, therefore you have more content to reflect on. Because you have more content to reflect on, therefore you have more wisdom that arises from reflection. The more wisdom you have from reflection, thus the more you can meditate on. Because you've meditated on much, thus your attainment of wisdom from meditation is more. So, what is the effect of having wisdom from meditation? That is to eliminate all faults and to increase all good qualities. That is how it works!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 00.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P95, L1]***

So from here, we have learned that the reason the author did not mention relying on virtuous teacher here, even though listening to the teaching requires relying on virtuous teachers. Hence, Youthful Sudhana felt that one teacher was not enough, so he consulted two teachers and traveled a long distance and sought a total of 53 great virtuous teachers. Why did he succeed in one lifetime? Well, the sequence is methodical. It is that simple, is it clear? Here, we have been taught this concept. So, later when we are reviewing, one should study more of these great scriptures and commentaries. At that time, you will know why Buddha said in the *Lotus Sutra*, "I have given you the best for many eons, but you only pick and choose what you

like.” Ah, yes! Got it! That’s it. Well! Even if you may have some achievement [by applying your partial understanding], but it arose only after going around in a big circle. By then, you will know clearly and explicitly [the importance of systematic order], well, this is the general outline.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 01.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P95, L8]***

Conversely, you claim, no, no, no, the teachings have to be totally understood. Then, not only are they understood, but they also must be followed one step at a time. You should not grasp onto the concept of this “I”. If you do so, you are done! If you grab onto it, then the virtuous teacher’s instructions will not necessarily be heard. While he is teaching, you may think, “Oh, this person is talking about me.” Yes, he is talking about you! The purpose is for you to rectify your faults! Even the worldly saint [Confucius] said, “Zi-lu\* is pleased to hear others point out his faults.” When Zi-lu heard other people telling him about his mistakes, he was pleased, “I am able to mend the mistake.” Now, you were told to change, are you not willing? How can you improve? So after a while, this “I” inflates bigger and bigger. Then how can you practice? Isn’t this very obvious?

***[\*Zi-lu was Confucius’ student.]***

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 01.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P96, L5]***

So I often tell myself now, ah, I am so fortunate! I also suggest this to everyone, sometimes I use a harsher tone, and often say if you don’t rectify this, then take off the robe and go home! I actually don’t deliberately say it this way. I just use it as a method to spur action. I hope you all can

understand. Everyone came here with the wish to do our best. Of course, that is absolutely right. However, how can we achieve the best? The fundamental concept is right here. Now let's continue:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 02.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P96, L10]***

**Therefore, the scriptures and their commentaries say that study and reflection are very important for the practice of meditation.**

Therefore, all great scriptures and commentaries say this: for the actual practice of the teaching, study, and reflection are the most important. This systematic order cannot have any tiny bit of mistakes, not even any flaw. Speaking of this, I remember a very, very... how to put it? It can be considered as interesting, but at the same time it is also quite heart wrenching. *The Sutra on the Buddha's Bequeathed Teaching* is very fundamental and important. We can also consider it to be one of the easier texts to understand. There was a person with a kind intention, who translated it into English - it was interpreted into English. Oh, this person is quite famous. At the end [of his translation], when discussing wisdom, the teaching tells us, "One should study, reflect, and meditate to achieve wisdom to benefit the self." Perhaps, for those of you here, some of you newly joined sitting in the back, may not understand. You can review what we are studying now! One should study, reflect, and meditate to achieve wisdom, and this one refers to each individual [of us], so to enhance the benefit. But, in the end, he slightly touches upon the translation of "study and reflects." He didn't know the significance of "study and reflection" these two words. He only talked about meditation. Actually, the scriptures and commentaries tell us, for

meditation, “study and reflection is the core.” Once you have “study and reflection,” then practice of meditation will certainly follow. Without study and reflection, meditation is impossible!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 04.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P97, L6]***

Thus, come to think of it now, I just mention it in passing to encourage and remind myself. I often have this thought before teaching, at least clarify the systematic order, even if I don’t understand it. Once I have understood the entire lineage and tell others, this will not confuse others and will not misguide them. Otherwise, if we randomly flip through the teachings, ah, feel that I understood it. One might rely on one’s own wits instead of abiding by the lineage and deliver erroneous teachings. We might confuse others for what to believe and bring harm to Buddha Dharma. This is a very serious matter! Continuing,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 04.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P97, L11]***

***Objection: What is determined through study and reflection is not intended for meditation, but is merely for promoting superficial knowledge and eliminating others’ misconceptions. Therefore, when you meditate, you must meditate on something unrelated to your study and reflection.***

Some say this, ah – earlier, some have said that when you meditate, you don’t need to reflect. Why is that? Because reflection is done during study and contemplation, it is not needed during meditation. Why? One thinks that study and reflection are all “merely for promoting superficial

knowledge and eliminating others' misconceptions." Oh, merely talk about reasoning! As for talking about this reasoning, now what you think about during meditation is not needed, and one should meditate on something else. So, normally what is our state? We may consider the same too, that we say application and realization are both important. Therefore, everyone sits in a classroom and discusses it. Afterward, good, time for practice, throw away what was just discussed and leave it behind, and now we are meditating. Such is the attitude. What is this equivalent to? It is like saying:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 05.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P98, L4]***

**Response: This is incoherent, like showing a horse one racecourse and then racing it on another.**

This is like telling you, oh, someone gives you directions when you are riding a horse. If we were to drive a car now, you are given a map to look at, well, which way are you taking? I am going from here to there, which direction should I take? After looking at the map before driving, then you take the completely opposite direction. May I ask why do you need to read the map? Yet we talked about how both [application and realization] are required, this appears to be a farce! So this aspect is very important! This is a very obvious matter. The aforementioned study and reflection already tell you how to apply the practice of meditation, thus, during meditation just take the opportunity to apply what was just taught! Therefore, we should say, now that our discussion is done, do you understand? Yes! Once understood, then start to apply what was just taught and practice sincerely, this is the right attitude! There is no such thing as having a different view [for meditation]. This

concept is inevitable. Once you have this understanding then you are able to apply properly and achievement becomes possible. So, there is definitely a cause and effect relationship between study and reflection. This we should know.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 06.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P98, L13]***

So one more reminder, the reason we have these flaws right now is due to various causes. Later, very likely we may advance on the path properly to rejuvenate Buddha Dharma and the benefit will be ours as well. If we advance improperly, not only will we not receive the benefit, but it may also harm others. People may observe and say, “Look! This Dharma Master who teaches me, he has taught for a while, but his deeds are just not coherent, alas!” As it turns out, this type of teaching is of no help, right? This is a very obvious fact.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 07.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P99, L3]***

Therefore this is why I am saying here: what is a senior monk in my mind? That is, his deeds are good examples for later generations. I believe we can encourage each other with this effort. As for other [practitioners], we should not criticize – they could be the manifestation of Bodhisattvas. When we become Bodhisattvas, we might manifest that way as well. As I assess and measure myself, I believe I am only an ordinary being, so I should abide by the proper teachings. Furthermore, in your study of Dharma, are you training others or yourself? Training my own behavior. If it is training your own behavior, why bother with others? Isn't this very obvious? Therefore, Buddha Dharma repeatedly

teaches us mind training, training the mind. You have to be mindful of yourself! By then, you will naturally be occupied with your own practice. Once you have enough qualifications, and you can say compassionately “I can help him now”. That is when you are very clear that your assistance of others is based on compassion instead of agitatedly thinking, “I can’t stand him being like this.” That attitude is wrong! This concept is very explicit and very clear. So, next:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 08.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P99, L11]***

**This completely destroys the process of developing the three wisdoms in succession, which is what the scriptures, as a whole, present. This also implies the nonsensical statement, “Much study is not needed to travel the true path.”**

Other than the above, with the aforementioned concept of view and deed, they have been considered as two separate matters. Not only is this totally absurd, but it has a great flaw, which is very serious. Because of this misconception, thus, what is the complete order of Buddha Dharma, the pertinent instruction? It must be the sequence of study, reflect, and meditate. Now, he [the practitioner with the misconception] actually states that study and reflection are unrelated to meditation, isn’t he damaging the complete systematic order of these three steps? Thus, “this completely destroys the process of developing the three wisdoms in succession, which is what the scriptures, as a whole, present.” The “whole” within the “as a whole, present” has a special meaning, the overall outline has the most complete content. The cause for our present situation, the fragmentation of Buddha Dharma, is that [the systematic

order] has been damaged, it is broken. So, nowadays meditators claim that they do not need study and reflection, whereas those who practice study and reflection do not think there is a need to meditate, just like that. Next, it says “process of developing.” What is developing? Whether you truly conform or not, it has to proceed in this manner. Otherwise, it would be impossible to advance. Therefore, in this situation, the above erroneous views ridiculously state: “much study is not needed to travel the true path.” This is totally mistaken, completely wrong! Continuing,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P110; 27B, 10.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P100, L9]***

**One indication of a failure to recognize these critical points is in not distinguishing in the beginning between those who are well-trained in the sutras or tantras and those who have no training at all, and then not assigning the appropriate amount of practice.**

So if you do not understand the concepts above - cannot grasp the meaning - then there will appear a condition for us. What is that? Since study and reflection have nothing to do with meditation, thus a person who has engaged in a lot of study and reflection, yet another one who has done none of that, both apply the same meditation - as long as the meditation is the same, the effect should be the same, right? Shouldn't it turn out to be this way? Therefore, what kind of effect will arise? The effect will certainly be one who studies a lot and one who does not study at all, yet the meditation effect is the same. So you might think that study and reflection are not needed. Actually, this is wrong! However, this requires some explanation here. Some may ask, “Well, since the scriptures



state this, then why was the Sixth Patriarch [of Chinese Zen lineage] illiterate? Yet he was accomplished!” Would you have this kind of question? It is inevitable that some will have this doubt. Let me tell you, the reasoning is very clear. From our worldly perspective, you are evaluated from age one until you die, it could be 30 years, 50 years, or 120 years, and then this life is done. Actually, is studying Buddha Dharma like this? No, not at all!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 11.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P101, L6]***

In general, to put it simply, we often say that there are three great eons or three great kalpas. Let's not say three great eons, take a look at our present world. Elementary school, middle school, and college, right? So right now for you to say you went to elementary school for six years and graduated, then this phase is done. Next, you entered middle school and you are a beginner again, upon graduating from middle school, which completes another phase. College is another phase; there are a total of three major phases. During the six years of elementary school, this year is first grade, the next year is the second grade, and this is yet another phase. Within the first grade, this is the spring semester and that is the fall semester, there are still phases. Furthermore, today is today, tomorrow is tomorrow; isn't every day different? So when we look from this perspective, after we sleep for one night, wake up in the morning, will the recognition of a college student be the same as that of an elementary student? It would be different, right? It will be different.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 13.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P101, L14]***

We may take one step further; take the case of engaging in business - we are all doing business. I am a peddler selling popsicles on the street, carrying a bucket on my back. You are then like Mr. Wong [a successful Taiwanese businessman], a great entrepreneur. It turns out we all sleep in the same area. For instance, today everyone sleeps in the same area and, upon waking up in the morning; I get up and feel that my pocket probably has 50 dollars in it. Whereas when Mr. Wong reaches in, oh, there is \$500 billion, right? Is this clear? Well, we all wake up in the morning, why is it that I only have \$50 and he has \$500 billion? Why? It is obvious he accumulated it from before. Thus, the Sixth Patriarch already has been accumulating for many lifetimes. How did he accumulate? Pardon! It is still abiding by the systematic order to advance step by step, is this clear?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 14.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P102, L6]***

So now we should never say “ah, the Sixth Patriarch was such!” Or some would say, you see, especially now for those chanting Buddha’s names, why is it that so many grandpas and grandmas who are illiterate but just by chanting Buddha’s name, pass away peacefully [to Pure Land]. Therefore, I want nothing else, I’m just going to recite Buddha’s name and I can go there, as well. Certainly, if you are older and you are a lay practitioner, this chanting is the best role model and you should apply accordingly, that is absolutely true.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 14.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P102, L10]***

If you are still young now, and as a monastic with the future responsibility of spreading the Dharma, this should not be the approach. Why? In the future, you will recite and teach others. At that time, people will ask you, how do we chant Buddha's name? How do we meditate on the Dharma? You will tell them, "Alas, I don't even know how. I just know how to recite Amitabha Buddha." Well then it is fine, how do we recite Buddha's name? You don't know it properly either. May I ask you, where did your responsibility of spreading the teaching go? Isn't it obvious? So you have to understand more. Even for you to take one step back, the old grandma may be able to go [to Pure Land] after chanting, well, we may not necessarily go! Do you believe it? If you don't, might as well go lock yourself up [in a retreat], lock yourself up to give it a try [the chanting]. For you to be locked up for seven days, will you be able to sustain it? The first day might be pretty good, on the second day one becomes agitated. On the third day, you will want to take a walk in the street and can't stand the retreat. Why is it that she [the grandma] could and I can't? It was just mentioned, that is everyone's backgrounds from previous lives are endowed with different qualifications. So we should first recognize our own adequacy. By then, we will be able to find the entrance to our first step. This was mentioned before, later it will be mentioned again, and all these are about the same concept.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 15.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P103, L5]***

So my feeling is, if the above example is feasible, it will not be very promising for you to learn from this grandma. If it were I, the Sixth Patriarch would not be efficient enough either, why? The Sixth Patriarch went to listen to the

*Diamond Sutra*, understood it, and then went to look for the fifth Patriarch. After that, it took a long time [for the Sixth Patriarch to reach his achievement]. If I want to learn, learn from the Buddha! I want to go to the banks of India's Nairanjananadi River, wait until December eighth [Buddha attained ultimate enlightenment on this day of the lunar calendar], look up and become a Buddha! Wouldn't this be even better? So it's definitely quite inefficient to follow the grandma, is this right? Will it work? For this I am not joking, this is very clear and explicit. You have to clearly distinguish between the Dharma characteristics and signs of application, by then you will not take the detour. Otherwise, too many of us always feel the Sixth Patriarch was like that, I better do the same for the convenience of it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 16.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P103, L12]***

We should know that there are two important factors in studying Buddha Dharma: one is correct view and the other is joyous perseverance; just in case you lost the correct view. Even if you have the correct view, with joyous perseverance that means engaging fearlessly. Now, before you engage in it, the feeling is alas, how troublesome! Before actually doing it, you are beating the drum of retreat. Can you succeed? The two factors of Buddha Dharma, correct view and joyous perseverance, are severed in half by this erroneous [beating the drum of retreat]. Yet you talk about Buddha Dharma and claim that you want to save all living beings, wouldn't that be talking a big game? Are they words uttered while you were asleep? We should properly reflect on this and thoroughly be introspective within. Therefore, here it tells us that we need to recognize the discernment with these two\*; there is a big difference here.

[\*The two are correct view and joyous perseverance, actually Late Master also mentioned yearning for virtue as the 3<sup>rd</sup> important factor to encourage our advancement.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 17.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P104, L3]***

Up to this point, if one is still not very clear about this concept, continue to keep up with this proper attitude. Of course, by understanding more of the Dharma characteristics, you will recognize clearly and comprehend more. And when observing the mental stream, you will experience that this reality is definitely true. At that time, you will be completely steadfast. In this condition, your advancement will be solid and steady – thousands have applied this approach, and all will be able to reach [Pure Land]. Now let's continue.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 17.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P104, L7]***

**Another such indication is that meditators are criticized if they study or do research. These mistaken customs persist in Tibet.**

So with the above, those who expressed these statements had a serious flaw. They had a kind of grasping, what did they grasp on? They grasped on the concept of study and reflection, and they claimed that these are flaws. Well, so now, teaching is not needed, all you have to do is chant Amitabha Buddha, and that will be sufficient! Just like that! Moreover, you do not need to be bothered with it, just focus on contemplating one statement and that's it! Furthermore, for the tenet study sect, where they are

supposed to discuss tenets, there appear to be some groups of people who say that [the teaching] is not necessary, and just chanting [the name of] *Namo Lotus Sutra*, and that's it! Now we all have this tendency where tantra practitioners only abide by a mantra. Thus, regardless of the sect, all end up on a detour. Everyone makes the same mistake, what does this mean? "Mistaken customs" bring harm to Buddha Dharma, and "persists" on this mistake. This is quite distressful, very grievous!

**[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 18.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P105, L1]**

I used to be the same way. Well, one virtuous teacher taught me, told me that it is certainly the way it should be [just chanting Buddha's name or title of the Sutra]! That is great, so I also coax others everywhere I go, alas! You do not need to engage in these practices, they don't make any sense, hurry up and meditate! I can hardly wait to burn the texts. Alas! Buddha will honestly break down and cry over this [erroneous attitude]! This *Ten Wheel Sutra of Ksitigarbha*, everyone should read it thoroughly. For a Mahayana monk, actually, regardless of what kind of practitioner you are, the Theravada [practitioners] should not slander Mahayana [practitioners]. Mahayana also should not slander Theravada either. The sutras state clearly, "For immeasurable eons, I have sacrificed my head, eyes, brain, and bone marrow for the sake of seeking one passage. This is how I can present this Dharma Jewel to all of you here." And then you just casually say, "Well, this is not useful." So Buddha said, non-Buddhists couldn't damage [the teachings], for they are non-Buddhists to begin with, they act against the teachings anyway. Of course for other people, they would at most laugh it off. But once you put on

this robe and become a disciple of Buddha. Well, if you say that this [teaching] is of no use, then for those followers of yours, when they hear that this is of no use, if this is not the degeneration of Buddha Dharma, then when will it be? May I ask, who should be responsible for this? So now we say it day and night that our karmic obstacles are weighty. Just by saying it verbally, yet the deeds created still are the weightiest karmic debt. Slandering the teachings is the weightiest karma, right? Think about it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 20.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P105, L11]***

So, the above outline already states it earlier, and it is brought up here again, as we continue this will be discussed repeatedly. Thus, this text tells us, “the greatness of enabling one to refrain automatically from great wrongdoing.” [v.1 p.53] This is it. Once we have this understanding, well, one then, regardless of the object will pay great respect! Then what should we do [about our misconception]? It tells us previously to try to practice with great respect what we are able to apply right now. With what we are unable to practice, we should recognize because I have not eliminated karmic obstacles and accumulated merits, so strive hard at it. Once the obstacles are eliminated and merits are accumulated, by then I will be able to apply the teaching. So, do this at the causal stage, never abandon it. Instead, one should not consider that one’s obstacles are too weighty, just maintain wholehearted respect. Because you are able to apply this at the causal stage, the obstacles are removed. Pay respect to the object, by then you naturally can learn more. Now, at your causal stage if you were to belittle it and throw it away, eventually what kind of fruition will your effect produce? When the condition for practice arises, you will toss it away, this is

certain. Is this clear? Always remember that Buddha Dharma has a cause and effect as well as dependent arising condition, just like this. So let's continue:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 21.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P106, L5]***

**While mere familiarization with knowledge acquired through the wisdom of study and reflection is indeed not a good quality that results from meditation, how could this contradict familiarization as simply being equivalent to meditation?**

Hence, we need to recognize that, regarding study and reflection, these two tasks, they are nothing but familiarization. Thus, study and reflection require continuous practice, practice, and practice. So, in a broader definition, it is meditation. Here the author did not use meditation but instead uses "familiarization," actually, they are the same. That is in a broader sense; you need to continuously strive on study and reflection, right! Therefore, although it is not the narrower definition of meditation as in the "study, reflect, and meditate,"\* it is, however "equivalent to meditation." Actually, our practice of the teaching is the broader sense of meditation. There is no contradiction, and not only is there no conflict, moreover this is the required order! This is the first one, to establish [the perception] from the positive aspect. Next, the author clarifies it from the opposite perspective.

**[\*v.1 p.110 study □ wisdom that comes from study is the result of meditation; reflection □ wisdom that comes from reflection is the result of meditation; meditation □ and wisdom that comes from meditation.]**



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 22.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P106, L12]***

**If it did, then meditation would never be possible for an ordinary being who had not attained access to the first meditative stabilization. For, the texts on knowledge often explain that the process of entering a higher level from the level of the desire realm creates a good quality that results from meditation, but there is no such result of meditation [creation of a good quality] associated with the desire realm itself.**

Let's talk about the last statement first, which is about the sutras and commentaries. In the sutras and commentaries, the above concepts are ubiquitous. They are covered in many sections, so what are the above-mentioned concepts? This part requires explanation, as the majority of you here may not understand. Earlier the text taught us that, when we study and reflect, that counts as meditation. There is no contradiction, and it is accurate – we cannot say that there is a contradiction. If one thinks that it is contradictory to consider study and reflection to be meditation, then a big flaw will arise and surface. What is this big flaw? Normally, when we refer to meditation, in a narrower sense it is study, reflect, and meditate, right! That is study first, once you understand then follow with reflection, and then meditation, and meditate to attain certain effect that is how it works. So, in general, let's not refer to the supramundane level, as for the worldly sense of meditative stabilization, what is the attainment of this meditative stabilization? It is a small effect of meditation. You are taught during distraction, the condition is such, and meditative stabilization is such. What are the benefits of meditation and the faults of distraction – it is to stimulate your aspiration to pursue it. Then it follows by telling you how to practice meditative stabilization. Later,

upon your clarification of the taught concept, abide by it to practice, and eventually, you will achieve that meditative stabilization. This is how it works. So this is the definite [course].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 24.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P107, L10]***

Therefore, in the “desire” realm, when we refer to the desire realm, it is the three miserable realms, human realm, and the six deity levels of the desire realm. Then, all the way up until the last level that is known as “not attained access to the first meditative stabilization.” These are all part of the desire realm. There is no attainment of the first meditative stabilization. Thus, since the stabilization has not been attained, there is no “creation of a good quality” associated with desire realm, right! Because what is the minimum qualification for you to attain the first level of meditative stabilization? The first level of meditative stabilization arises from applying the practice of meditative concentration. Before you practice meditative concentration, the first level of meditative stabilization will not arise. But there is one exception – those who have already entered the first [Bodhisattva] stage, which are the Bodhisattvas on the stages that are endowed [with the first level of meditative stabilization]. The reason they have it is because they have meditated before. Like the story we have mentioned just now, even though we all sleep through the night, when we wake up, he has \$50 billion in his pocket that he stashed away from long ago. In other words, for those of us who sincerely want to abide by the teachings, being in the desire realm, it is not possible for you to achieve the effect of good qualities that arise from meditation. It is not possible to achieve the stabilization. Once you have attained meditative stabilization, you are entering the form realm.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 25.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P108, L3]***

Well, then may I ask, before your attainment, what method do you apply in order to get it? Or to attain meditative stabilization, that is the effect we are seeking, right? Now, what cause can you use to achieve it? For example, I need to eat, so I need to buy rice, to wash it, to cook it, and so on, these are the causes. By doing so, the rice will be cooked. This cooked rice will not fall from the sky. So, strictly speaking, before one attains meditative stabilization, what preparations are required? Study and reflection these two are the causes. Then, you rely on these causes to advance step by step to achieve this meditative stabilization. This is very clear and explicit. Conversely, if they are contradictory, like your claim that study and reflection are of no help, then may I ask, how can the effect arise? In other words, it is impossible to have worldly meditative stabilization; if meditative stabilization is not possible, could wisdom arise? Will wisdom be available? So now many will say, "Ah, I need to practice meditative stabilization, don't need this [study and reflection]." So, may I ask, if you do not have the cause, from where will your effect arise? So we have discussed this from the positive perspective, and the argument from the opposite side.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 27.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P108, L12]***

So, up to this point, I will mention this in passing. Why is it that Buddha Dharma was thriving in India back then? It is because the teaching was very strict, it was without loopholes and there was not any tiny chance for any flaws. Perhaps for us now, the reason I say this, is that some of us

sitting here, well, feel that this is so hard to learn or may be very disturbed within. Thus, if your qualification is not there, then truthfully, you should leave and go home. If you lock up at home to recite Buddha's name and that will be sufficient. This is an honest statement; reciting Buddha's name is definitely good. However, if you are young and sincere about the study, then all these details should be thoroughly understood. By then you will be truly steadfast [on the path].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 27.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P109, L3]***

Let me provide an example and you will understand. For instance, we are all here to resolve an issue. For example, we need to resolve a monastic issue. There are two different opinions. Now the first solution is this, raise your hand for approval, how many are there? Three or five, that is fine. So those in favor of the second solution please raise your hands, three or five. Regardless of whether there are three or five, it is decided and we proceed with this decision. It sounds like this should work, right? Well, when we need to do it, it won't work. One may ask, "It was decided, why won't it work?" "I didn't raise my hand!" So what can you do about this person, right? Everyone, do you understand this example I just gave? This is really important!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 27B, 28.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P109, L9]***

Let's say we have 30 people sitting here today. We decided this afternoon that we are going to do something in a certain way. Some have suggested doing it this way. So I ask everyone, those in favor, please raise your hands. There are two people. Those in favor of doing it another

way, please raise your hands. Five people. So it is set, and go for it! By the afternoon, no one has acted on it, by asking, “It was decided, why don’t you do it?” “I didn’t raise my hand!” So you can do nothing about this person. Isn’t it so? Thus, this way is not going to work. Even though it didn’t work, it’s fine, not a big deal. May I ask do you want to apply the teaching? Now my question to you is if you want to meditate and you don’t understand the concept, at that time, well, well! Either left or right won’t work. This is due to your limited understanding!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P113, L1]***

Doing it this way doesn’t work, and doing it that way doesn’t work either! So, after being occupied for some time, I call this making no headway, think about it, is it true? Actually, the concept is as such. For those of you sitting here with past experience, please reflect: some have been ordained for three years, five years, ten years, eight years, and with this one discovery of, ah, why is it that, after working for so long, the afflictions have increased! Nowadays, many often say that those who are newly ordained have a stronger mentality. After being ordained for a longer time, it gradually fades. Why? Why is that? The cause is right here [lack of repeated application of the teaching]. So by reading just the words, actually the true intent of Lamrim is hard to be seen clearly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 00.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P113, L6]***

So let me tell you, what I have specifically explained [about casting ballot], this was how strict it was in India back

then – the positive side is this, the negative side is that. Thus, similarly for the example I just mentioned, now that we've decided to use this approach, those in favor please raise your hands! Some raised their hands. On the other hand, I am not using this approach, now, there is another solution – those in favor of this raise your hands. Otherwise, don't raise your hand, so the problem is solved. By that time, if you raised your hand, you are in favor [of one of the decisions]. Those who didn't raise their hands disapprove and this is very obvious. For those of you sitting here is there anyone who will say I either raised or did not raise my hand, is that possible? Not possible, right? Either you approve or not, all of you here fall into one of the two groups.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 01.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P114, L3]***

Now, here, why is it put this way? That is, well! If this way works or that way works, it has to be one of the two – this is to clarify the issue to resolve all doubts. By then, when you are meditating, you will [decide]...right! If this doesn't work, then that way has to work. On the other hand, if that way does not work, then this way must work. So this is why the science-of-logic has to be truly precise to prevent any loopholes, this you need to be clear about. So here let me also bring this up – I believe you probably all understood the remaining explanation. At least in this present circumstance, it allows us to have this impression in our minds. Later, when we begin the actual study, this [binary decision-making support] is truly important. Let's continue, move on. This concept has been covered earlier; "for, the texts on knowledge often explain that", this concept in the Bodhisattvas' commentaries has already been clearly explained.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 02.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P114, L10]***

**Therefore, understand “meditation” as it is explained in Dharmamitra’s *Clear Words Commentary (Prasphutapada)*:**

**“Meditating” is making the mind take on the state or condition of the object of meditation.**

Well, for the “meditation”, we should know what the content of meditation is. It’s like what Lamrim has clearly explained, it is to enable our thought process – “meditating is making the mind” this is talking about our mental intention. In a broader sense, it is our entire consciousness. And “take on the state or condition of the object of meditation” constitutes your object of meditation. For this, I might as well go over the content; and then you should be able to understand the text. First, it explains:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 03.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P115, L2]***

**For example, “meditating on the compassion” and “meditating on faith” mean that the mind must be made to develop these qualities.**

For instance, you want to meditate on compassion and faith. Are you compassionate now? No. When you see a person, [you think] this guy deserves to [suffer]! Once you have meditated on compassion, then when you see him, alas, you will have sympathy for him. So your meditating on it is needed. Often, we hear others say something and do you think this guy makes any sense? You meditate on it – ah, you completely believe him. In the past, when you hear

him [you think]: “what’s so great about that? I know that, too!” At that time, you will not follow him wholeheartedly – that is to change your mind within. During our actual meditation, one should know that there are various topics to meditate on. In general, they are divided into four major categories, four major conditions. That is the states before and after meditation. In other words, the state prior to meditation, and the other one is the state afterward, just these two states. What is the state prior to meditation? It is our current state of mind: the arising mental intention, the afflictive views of conceptuality – everyone is into arguing. Then the afflictive sentiment – everyone attempts to take advantage, just like that. Perhaps you took advantage and harmed others – this is the coarse aspect. As for the subtler aspect, they are the afflictive granules and ignorance, etc., which are classified differently.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 04.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P115, L13]***

After meditation, there is change, and these changes can be categorized into four major types. Those stated above are our mental conditions; our mental condition usually is either attachment or rejection. Once we have meditated, there will be one effect, which is to successfully transform one’s mind on to the object of meditation. For example, when previously one would see a certain object and form an attachment, now the reaction is disenchantment, looking at it with disgust. Ah! All these things I once thought were good, actually, they should be the enemy causing my rebirth in cyclic existence – you see it with loathing. Therefore, for all those who cultivate the view of impurities, once you succeed at it, what was once a great attachment now becomes a detested object. Perhaps



within our imaginations, this seems very difficult to achieve. That is because you have not learned it yet, indeed.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 05.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P116, L5]***

Several years ago, I forget which year that was, could be about ten years ago. In Taipei, I don't recall the location. Once, I was casually talking about [the view of impurity] with people there. There was one disciple who heard it and started crying incessantly. I recognized that she must have been affected by the topic, so I asked her about it. She said that she applied the view of impurity at home and, unfortunately, she succeeded. You may ask why is it unfortunate if it is successful? Because she is a lay practitioner, a woman, and is married; once she succeeded in this meditation, she became disgusted with the sensual desire to an extreme. That is when it is troublesome – you don't want it, yet your partner desires it! She didn't know what to do, so upon touching on the subject, she cried her heart out with intolerance. This impurity practice actually is not difficult; it is just from a lack of proper instruction.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 06.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P116, L11]***

I also told everyone yesterday that my remedy against food took many years of struggle. Later, upon attaining skillful means, how wonderful, how refreshing! Coolness! Relief! By then, the feeling I had before of being bound by it... although you repeatedly say, "You should not be attached, do not grasp!" Sorry, the spicy sauce over there causes you to salivate – it has bound you and the mind is afflicted. Now, in the same situation you can let go, cool off, be relieved, and be disciplined. This is the effect of proper

transformation. So what happened at this juncture? Your mind is transformed away from contamination – the state of the mind was once tainted and transforms to become disenchanted. By the same token, usually you are careless about others, totally ignore others – it is all about me. This other person, forget him! At that time your attitude is different – what is mine is not necessarily important – compassion and empathy is one type [of the four effects of meditation].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 07.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P117, L3]***

Another type is, after your analysis of and reflection on the object of meditation, you should understand the content. For example, we now refer to this as me, me, me; always thinking it is about me. Until you truly understand that it actually is “selflessness,” ah! You realize that: I have always thought that “there is a self,” but actually it is “selflessness” – the self is the enemy that bound me in the cyclic existence! You would then not view the self as something important. Usually, we take things as “permanent,” but now it is “impermanent.” This is what you should know about this object or aim. This is the second [of the four effects of meditation].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 07.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P117, L8]***

The third [of the four effects of meditation] is about your aspirational goal after meditation. For example, let’s say that we are inspired to be reborn to Pure Land. That is your aspirational goal, right? In the beginning, it is certain, of course, later you become mindful of Pure Land – your mind becomes the Pure Land. Thus, our current meditation

practice should be: alas, this is not where I want to be; I wholeheartedly want to go to that [Pure Land] of my aspirational goal.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 08.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P117, L12]***

As for the last one [of the four effects of meditation], it is what you mindfully remember these categories. In general, it is probably encompassed in these categories. Now, after we have applied the meditation practice, our minds can “take on the state” or “condition of the object of meditation.” This is the above discussion [of the four effects of meditation\*].

**[\*4 effects of meditation:**

- 1. Analyze and contemplate the content of the object - selflessness**
- 2. View things as impermanent over permanent**
- 3. Aspire to the ultimate higher goal**
- 4. Keep the above 3 in mind]**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 08.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P118, L1]***

**Because of this, even the great translators sometimes use the term “path of meditation,” and at other times use the term “conditioning,”**

Therefore, for those great commentators and translators, in their translations, some interpret this as “meditation” and others use “conditioning.” Conditioning and meditation are the same. But, during meditation, one must continuously, repeatedly apply [the object of meditation], and that is called conditioning. Thus next,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 09.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P118, L4]***

**as in the phrase from Maitreya's *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*,**

According to the *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*, that was Honorable Ajita also known as Maitreya Bodhisattva, composed it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 09.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P118, L6]***

**“the paths of seeing and conditioning.” Conditioning and meditation are synonymous.**

It says that the path of seeing\* and the path of conditioning are synonymous – conditioning and meditation are the same.

**[\*Five paths from ordinary being to Buddhahood in ascending order: path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation, and path of no more learning.]**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 09.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P118, L8]***

**Furthermore, Venerable Maitreya says:**

**As for the branch of certain differentiation,  
The path of seeing, and the path of meditation,  
It is repeated reflection, comprehension, and  
definite discernment  
That constitute the path of meditation.**

## **Maitreya says that repeated reflection, comprehension, and definite discernment constitute the path of meditation for a Mahayana noble being.**

This is to explain the above text. What commentary of Venerable Maitreya is this? It is the *Ornament for Clear Knowledge* – this is the most complete instruction for an ordinary being to reach the state of Buddhahood. Back then in India, primarily all Mahayana practitioners studied this. It is the same in Tibet now, regardless of whether it is the Nyingma or Gelug tradition, this is the required curriculum because it has every stage of the entire meditation progression! Ajita or known as Maitreya composed this commentary. It states, “as for the branch of certain differentiation, the path of seeing, and the path of meditation.” In other words, the path of seeing is the entrance to being a Bodhisattva, and is followed by the path of meditation, and this section is to prepare for it. What are these for? “It is repeated reflection, comprehension, and definite discernment that constitute the path of meditation.” “Repeatedly” means to continuously reflect, comprehend, and analyze – this is common in both direct-cognition and inferential-cognition. What is “inferential”? Reflect on this concept and, once you are sure of it, then earnestly analyze and meditate. After meditation, the true nature of reality will arise. So for a Mahayana noble being, continuous reflection and analysis are required. And yet we claim these are not required, how absurd!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 10.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P119, L5]***

**In light of this, it is ridiculous to claim that meditation and sustained analysis are contradictory.**

Well, reflect on the above statement, then one will know. It says, we have actually mixed up study and reflection with meditation - how ridiculous is such confusion! Thus, there was an earlier statement – “nonsensical chatter.” Even the literal translation seems interesting. However, in fact, these two words should make us even more vigilant. We now know that we often say: “You don’t need to discern!” Amitabha Buddha, for goodness’ sake! For this, by now we should have an accurate understanding. Yes, nonconceptual sublime wisdom, certainly! What is that? It is the effect! How do you achieve it? It is based on the preceding proper study and proper reflection to eliminate erroneous concepts, misconceptions, attachments, and ignorance. Through proper recognition and purification, the final product is just that [nonconceptual sublime wisdom]. However, now we have reversed cause and effect. Buddha Dharma explained the certainty of cause and effect, yet those who study Buddha Dharma have reversed the cause and effect; what else is there to be discussed! So here we should rejoice, ah, how nice! Now we have this understanding.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 12.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P119, L14]***

Now let’s take a look at the next paragraph. From the above, we already know that those mistaken attachments regarding study and reflection do not complement meditation. It is very ridiculous, truly absurd. Thus, next the text begins teaching us how to apply them.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 12.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P120, L27]***

**Furthermore, there is no end to statements which explain that the purpose of sustained and repeated analysis is meditation. For instance, there are references to “meditating on faith”, “meditating on the four immeasurables and the spirit of enlightenment,” and “meditating on impermanence and suffering.”**

Just like the aforementioned, now we are about to formally practice the steps of meditation. The following several factors are for when one actually meditates: “faith” is the pure faith toward an excellent teacher. Then there are the “four immeasurables,” the “spirit of enlightenment,” and “impermanence and suffering,” which primarily exhorts you to generate disenchantment and joyous perseverance. All of these require repeated reflection and analysis, and this is called meditation. There are so many, so many, don’t even know how many [need to be meditated on]! So, up to now, we don’t know what the benefits are of the faith, the spirit of enlightenment, the impermanence, and the suffering stated above. Actually, the benefits are incredibly great. The details will be covered later; I just briefly bring it up here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 13.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P120, L11]***

The biggest reason that we are not able to practice now is that we have never reflected on impermanence and suffering before. Not recognizing that this is a world of suffering, thus we are unable to let go. If you recognize suffering, it’s impossible for you not to let go. If there is a cup of arsenic in front of you and, even though you didn’t take it, you realize that, by taking it, you will immediately bleed from all the seven orifices [of your head] and experience excruciating pain. If you mix it with ten kilos of honey, or regardless of whether it is hot sauce or butter, for

you to take it, are you willing to do so? If it were put in front of you, you would run away immediately. Why? You know that this is suffering.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 14.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P121, L1]***

Then there is the impermanence. Although it is necessary to apply it in meditation, yet one takes it slowly. If you realize that our life is impermanent and that death could come tomorrow, you will drop everything. Others may say, “So and so, there are still two million dollars in the bank that needs to be taken care of.” “What two million, even 20 million is none of my business!” I have to hurry up with the chanting of Buddha’s name as the most urgent matter. Why? By then, when your view of impermanence arises, with the true understanding of suffering, you definitely will have no obstacles [to apply the teaching]. That is why now we often say: that we need to seek profound teachings, seeking this or that. Why are we unable to achieve it? It is due to the foundation has not been established. Here, the author clearly tells us the order of the stages. Thus, there are many, many things that all require contemplation and analysis.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P111; 28A, 14.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P121 L7]***

***Santideva in his *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds and Compendium of Trainings* states, “I compose this in order to condition my own mind.”***

***In this way, he says that all the stages of the path that he explains in these two texts are meditation.***



Both *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* and the *Compendium of Training* are excellent commentaries that Mahayana practitioners must study. So here it states, “For myself to condition my own mind, so I compose this commentary.” Santideva tells us what is the attitude to do it. These two commentaries describe the various stages of applying the teachings on the path – there are many, many practices that must be applied in the meditation as we have mentioned earlier.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 15.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P121, L13]***

**Further, the *Compendium of Training* says,**

The author provides another validation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 15.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P122, L1]***

**“Therefore, meditate continuously on any distribution, protection, purification or enhancement of your body, resources, or merit.” This indicates that meditation includes any performance of the four practices of distributing, protecting, purifying, and enhancing with regard to your body, resources, or roots of virtue.**

Next, it explains. This is, because of the aforementioned, in order for you to remove suffering and attain happiness, and to liberate all sentient beings, etc. for these reasons, now what do you need to do? With regard to the aspects of “body, resources or roots of virtue,” what about them? They all need to be meditated on! If you are not able to obtain a human form, can you meditate? Of course not. If you have the human form, yet you lack

resources, being dirt poor, you have nothing internally or externally – are you able to practice meditation? No! You hardly have enough time to be a laborer or a beggar; such as it is. Moreover, there is not even enough time to collect sufficient virtuous roots. So all of this requires long-term cultivation, and all these meditations will eventually take us to the enlightened form of Buddha. Thus, these three [body, resources, and roots of virtue] here, each one needs to apply these four: “practices of distributing, protecting, purifying, and enhancing”. During one’s actual practice, that is: what should not be done – cast it aside, it is time to apply do away with it. With what should be protected, one protects and adopt whatever is required, and then? All of these need to be cleansed and purified, so as to enhance all of the above. Well, these are the four primary practices and all [Dharma categories] are included here.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 17.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P122, L12]***

**With this in mind, do not take “meditation” to be very limited.**

So “meditation” can be very broad. One certainly cannot persist with limitations – taking a grain of barley and saying that all grains are just like this. Therefore, by saying: I am human, all humans are me, then all of you are demons and goblins – this statement does not make sense. If this is casual talk, it does not matter. But if you grasp on it while you are meditating, then how can you have achievement? This is a very important concept.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 17.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P123, L3]***

**Moreover, to claim that all conceptual thought involves the apprehension of signs of true existence, and thus prevents enlightenment, is the worst possible misconception insofar as it disregards all discerning meditation.**

There are those who say that conceptual thought [discernment] means the apprehension of the signs of true existence – they are signs of grasping on such thought. To achieve Buddhahood, one must eliminate the signs of true existence, and now your perception is an obstacle, so you need to do away with it – it is not needed, eliminate it! “Well, you should not discern, you must be non-discursive to be right!” One should know, what is this? It is the lowest; the worst of all possible misconceptions, this one is the worst of the worst misconception. This we should recognize. For the aforementioned concepts, we have to precisely rely on proper discernment in order to eradicate wrongful discernments. This is very clear, very explicit. So, now in the very beginning, out of the blue you say: “Alas, there is no need to discern.” That is inverting the effect as the cause, so may I ask you, if you do not understand right from wrong, how do you practice? We can’t just say whatever and totally discard it, and then nothing can be accomplished. In the case of cooking, you put rice, vegetables, oil, salt, soil, etc., and cook everything in one pot, will that work? Of course not! This applies to everything, needless to say with studying Buddha Dharma.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 18.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P123, L13]***

This view was popular for a period of time in Tibet. Why was it popular? The reason was... I will briefly go over the story. Tibetan Buddhism began with the King Songtsan

Gampo and later thrived during the era of King Trisong Detsen. Songtsan Gampo was a king of great talents and bold visions, and he married two wives – one was a Nepalese princess and the other was Princess Wen-cheng, the daughter of Chinese Emperor Tang Tai-zong. So the entourage of Princess Wen-cheng brought many scriptures, statues, Chinese medicines, astrology texts, almanacs, etc. Among this Buddhist assembly, there was a monk who practiced Zen. However, his understanding of Zen was not thorough - he lacked a thorough understanding. So, he said you do not need to discern anything.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 19.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P124, L5]***

Last time I told you about the “frog monk” and so on. This monk didn’t have thorough understanding [of the teaching]. He claimed, “Old monk [like me] sitting in a lotus position, everything can be let go.” This person is said to be from Pu-tuo Mountain, and he often liked to eat frogs. People asked, “How can a monk do that?” He replied, “Well, an old monk like me sitting in a lotus position, everything can be let go!” He was not seeing the path. “According to the sutra, if you have truly reached the path of seeing, or reached certain attainment, even if you lose ten thousand grams of gold, that is fine, needless to say, how does a little frog compare in value? Moreover, once I am in a lotus position, everything can be let go!” Then people asked, “Old monk, you have let go of everything except eating frogs!” Thus, now he let go of everything except eating frogs. Well, for us now nothing can be let go. Moreover, our view and our mouth [the desire for food], our attachment is especially weighty. It is the same here, which also says: “Alas, don’t worry about it, you do not need to discern.” Imagine how

serious can this be! How serious! So here let's continue with the text:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 20.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P124, L14]***

**This is the system of the Chinese abbot Ha-shang.**

This is referring to the same abbot [the Ha-shang]. “Sino” is China, an ancient reference in the history. That abbot was a very nice person. Khenpo in Tibetan is the term for an abbot of a monastery. This refers to a misconception that he held. With regard to this misconception, it was later refuted by Kamalasila in Tibet, he was the great commentator. Kamalasila was an Indian. Later, due to this Ha-shang's misconception, after a discussion with no resolution, finally [Tibetans] went to India and invited this great commentator [Kamalasila] from India. As a result, the Chinese abbot was defeated [in debate]. After his defeat, Ha-shang left [Tibet]. However, the impact of the misconception has remained all the way to this day. Thus, this applies to anything: once it appears in this world, it is so hard for you to eliminate it. This is an absolute fact.

Before we start on the Lamrim text, I might as well mention that, as long as his erroneous view remains in the world, as long as there are people still suffering from this misconception, then the one who left this harm behind will be unable to leave hell realm. Take heed! Even if one is able to depart [from hell], there will be various residual effects. Thus, we should not carelessly say anything that is flawed. With many of these left behind, the impact of your action will be infinite. Consequently, the retribution of this bitter effect is incredibly weighty. This gives us a great

warning here, with how we act or give instructions, etc., one absolutely needs to be careful! Be cautious!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 21.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P125, L8]***

**I explain its refutation in the section on serenity and insight.**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 22.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P125, L14]***

Well then, regarding this concept, later when discussing the section on serenity and insight, the author will explain it in detail. This is one aspect. Let's continue.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 22.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P126, L2]***

**This misconception also interferes with the development of deep respect for the classic texts,**

Like the misconceived attachments above, a great obstacle will occur. What is obstructed? The respect for the scriptures will be obstructed. How? Normally, to study Buddha Dharma, at your causal stage, prior to having accurate understanding, the requirement is to have great respect and great admiration. Because by so doing one's obstacles can be eliminated, and you will gradually go deeper, this is how it is. If you do not respect them, the teachings will decline. Dharma requires respect. If you do not respect it, then it's hopeless. Why is there no respect now? ? [Qualm:] People might say that meditation does not require [the teachings], and you should not discriminate. Yet the scriptures clearly talk about discernment. Of course!

They say that after you study the scriptures; it will “block the door of realization.” Nowadays, many people are like this – if you study these [proper] teachings, your future realization will be blocked, so this practice is not what you want. Since it is not needed, of course, the respect is not there! As a Buddha Dharma practitioner, if you don’t pay respect, may I ask, who else will respect it? This is very serious!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 23.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P126, L11]***

**because these texts are mainly concerned only with the need to use discerning analysis,**

Because, actually, the concepts taught in the scriptures require our discerning analysis. Now, surprisingly, you think that discerning analysis is not needed. You say that discerning analysis is apprehending true existence and will prevent achievement of Buddhahood, so you forsake it. Of course, you will do away with the scriptures. Subsequently, the respect disappears, which results in the fading of Buddha Dharma, it will disappear.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 24.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P127, L1]***

**whereas Ha-shang’s system sees all analysis as unnecessary during practice.**

We don’t even need to talk about those who have mistaken discernment. Even though there are many, that is, those who also recognize the need for conceptual discussion. In other words, this is about, let’s not refer to the above mistaken Zen practitioner [Ha-shang], there are many tenet practitioners, well! Interestingly enough, when he

practices, he claims that this is not required for meditation. Alas! What can be done?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 24.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P127, L5]***

**This is also a major cause of the teaching's decline, because those who have this misconception do not recognize the classic scriptures and their commentaries to be instructions and therefore belittle their value.**

This is the degenerate time now – the teaching is waning. The primary cause of the decline of this sacred teaching is right here. Why? For you “do not recognize the classic scriptures and their commentaries to be instructions and therefore belittle their value.” You do not consider the great scriptures as real instructions, thus you have no respect within. If you don't respect them, what will happen? Of course, [eventually] no one will pay respect [to the teachings]. Moreover, with your lack of respect, this current cause will produce the future effect – you will not be exposed to the teachings, and that is how it works. This is why we have to pay great respect. Thus, the story above and the one mentioned earlier where the novice monk paid respect to the elder monk, and the elder monk said: “This is for your own good!” This young novice monk decided to leave the elder monk alone, [then the older monk said,] “This is for my benefit!” Such is the concept. Once you truly pay respect, the true benefit is yours. This we should know.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 25.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P127, L13]***



**Question: If, as you say, there are two types of meditation – analytical meditation and nonanalytical stabilizing meditation –**

So, during the actual session, there should be two types: one is analytical meditation and the other does not require analysis. The earlier misconceptions only specify stabilizing meditation, and not reflection. However, in reality, both are required. So here, the text is definitely not favoring one side, but they complement each other with seamless perfection. Then the achievement of a perfect effect becomes possible.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 26.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P128, L3]***

**– what kind of practice involves analytical meditation and what kind involves stabilizing meditation?**

**Reply: I will explain this.**

Well, then what requires reflection and discerning analysis? What does not require reflection and discerning analysis but stabilization with one-pointedness? Well, now it will be explained in great detail.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 26.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P128, L6]***

**Analytical meditation is necessary for meditations such as those on faith in the teacher; the great importance and difficulty in obtaining leisure and opportunity; death and impermanence; karma and its effects; the faults of cyclic existence; and the spirit of enlightenment.**

The following terms require analytical meditation. These will not be explained further here since they will be covered in great detail in later sections. After you see the detailed explanation, you will clearly understand it. These are the complete, required stages in our meditation progress. Since they will be covered later, they will not be discussed here. Well then, what are the effects of these terms? It says below:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 27.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P128, L11]***

**This is because these meditations need an awareness that is long-lasting, very forceful, and capable of changing the mind. Without this, you will not be able to stop the forces that oppose these meditations, such as disrespect.**

Next, it explains the above meditations on faith, leisure and opportunity, etc. It states that, after your meditation, what kind of effect will it generate in one's mind? "Long-lasting, very forceful, and capable of changing the mind." Before we change, we might want to think it over, what is our present state? In other words, before the transformation, our current state is not forceful. We just spend time idly, carelessly, and don't take things seriously. We seem to work without sufficient energy. Meditation should not be like this! Moreover, once transformed, it is different! However, the change does not happen in an instant, it has to be lasting. Sometimes, we work very diligently to strive at it. Other times we would say, today's morning and evening sessions are great and feel pleased. But the next day we might be a bit exhausted, that is not how it works! Or we might get up in the morning with good spirits, but it fades away after a while,

this will not do! The text said to maintain consistency, to transform our present state of non-conformity toward the teachings, and to change the state from ignorance to conformity. Not only should we change it, but we should also make it long lasting, forcefully transform the mind into proper mental attitude.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28A, 281.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P129, L8]***

What is the use of this? Let's not talk about this yet, if you do not have the transformation, then "you will not be able to stop the forces that oppose these meditations, such as disrespect." Once one is changed, there will be an effect – the changed mind can eliminate that which opposes the meditation, oppose what? Disrespect. Once you have purified faith in the excellent teacher, you will have respect. You will meditate on leisure and opportunity, impermanence; you will strive desperately without any delay. Once you have this understanding of the reciprocal relationship between cause and effect, you dare not to try to take advantage of any situation. You realize that you dare not to take any tiny bit of undue advantage, to make any improper small gains, because eventually, you will be the one who suffers.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 00.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P131, L1]***

Conversely, if you put in some hard work, you will make a fortune, that is the way it is! In this situation, naturally you will change, and the change should be lasting and forceful. Once your change is constant and powerful, then practice becomes easy. You will constantly be prepared there: for impermanence will strike with death at any moment. When

you die, you may descend to a suffering hell – thus, you can hardly wait [to meditate on the teaching]. Needless to say, you strive desperately while you still can - you might even work harder while sick. Why? Because when you are still able-bodied, your contemplation of impermanence will work well. But when one is sick – illness is a cause of death – now that you are sick, death may approach faster, how can you procrastinate? You will strive even harder, isn't it very obvious! Therefore, all these things mentioned above – to forcefully change our current leisure and casual attitude – all the aforementioned meditative reflection and analysis are required for practice. Thus,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 01.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P131, L8]***

**Furthermore, the development of such a powerful awareness solely depends upon repeated meditation with discerning analysis.**

The method above for removal of the opposing forces is to eliminate what we are not able to practice – to eradicate this mental obscuration – this relies on what? It relies on repeated reflection and discerning analysis, just like that. Next, it says:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 01.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P132, L2]***

**For example, when you mistakenly superimpose many attractive characteristics upon the object of your attachment, you produce intense attachment. Similarly, when you think often about the unattractive characteristics of your enemy, you produce intense hatred.**

This example in the text is quite easy to understand. Let me give you an actual situation. What does it explain? That is, our minds have the ability – the capability is there. What ability is that? That is, we can adjust our mental intentions to apply remedy against such obscuration. However, for now, we apply this ability on afflictions instead of the sublime teaching. How do we apply them to the afflictions? For example, something we didn't know about before, now we know, have understanding of it. For instance, let's say this "butter" was a foreign item [when first introduced to China], we certainly didn't know about it before. Now we know. What is this? "Butter!" Even if you already knew it, that is fine, then give it a try, "Well, it tastes pretty good!" So eat it today and then again tomorrow, after a few days, and then the day after that we cannot go without it. At that time, you will generate a strong preference for it, right?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 03.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P132, L11]***

So as long as this is practiced continuously, then with this you will generate a strong grasping. Becoming attached to what is favorable, but what about the unfavorable? It is rejected with hostility! For example, let's say someone usually is quite nice but, out of nowhere, another person tells you, "So and so! You trusted him, but actually, he is a big liar, he should be your enemy! All of your sufferings are because he is cheating you." You first will have doubts, "Is it true?" "Of course it is. Why don't you see for yourself!" Then you analyze carefully, ah! And you realize that he is focused on causing you trouble – the small favor he gave you, just a little bit, and then causes you to suffer a great deal. Upon your analysis and recognition of this fact, thus you generate this negative attitude: "This guy! In the past when he came

here, I always trusted him. It turns out that he is here just to harm me!” Your hostility arises. We all have this experience, right! This tells us that we all have this ability [to change our minds].

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 03.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P132, L11]***

So, now with this ability, if you were to apply it on the sublime teachings, it would function in the same way. What you have liked very much before, such as feeling that this person helped you so much, or like saying that certain foods will provide you nutrition, make you chubby and well fed. Now, you finally realize that all your causes of suffering arise from this [erroneous perception]! Buddha taught us: ah, this kind of happiness is the cause of suffering! You will have doubts: is that right? Then, Buddha tells you the concept, and you reflect and analyze accordingly. Up to a point, you will become certain, alas, it really is like that! By that time, you also seeing the same object, yet it becomes unbearable to you. Is this right? Do we have this experience? Yes! Thus, we do have this ability, but what is the issue? That is, one has to study the teachings properly, reflect and analyze accordingly. If you are able to generate lasting and forceful transformation, then advancement of meditation can absolutely be achieved!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 4.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P133, L5]***

**It is the same in the case of any meditation on any of these types of practices [death and impermanence, karma and its effects, etc.], regardless of whether the image of the meditative object is clear. Therefore, practice analytical meditation, because your mind**

## **requires a long-lasting and very forceful way to apprehend its objects.**

Regarding these topics, the text says below, what is “whether the image of the object is clear,” we’ll explain this statement later. What is the most important state here? It is that the mental attitude is very strong. For example, your attachment – this attachment does not mean that you actually can see it. No, not like that. It is where, unknowingly, there is a strong inclination formed within. So why does it say, “whether the image of the object is clear”? For example, if we are visualizing Buddha, sorry, to visualize Buddha, once you have successfully visualized, the image will be very clear and apparent. It is not necessarily very intense, but the mind is very steady and stable. Another aspect is that, even though your mind is not clearly seeing it, the intensity is there. There... are different situations. So what does it rely upon? It relies upon reflection. Everything has its unique method of practice, by then you may not necessarily be able to visualize it. Just reflect upon how this object will bring you great harm, and you will generate disgust toward it! If you reflect upon its great benefits, then you begin to like it! This requires reflection and discerning analysis. All these categories are known as analytical meditation. So what is the other kind of meditation?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 6.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P134, L8]***

**When you achieve stabilizing meditations such as meditative serenity, you create a serviceability that allows you to place your mind on one object of meditation according to your wish. If those whose minds cannot stay on one object of meditation analyze**

**repeatedly while they are trying to achieve a stabilizing meditation, they will be unable to produce mental stability. Hence, in this case, they should practice stabilizing mediation. I will explain this later in the section on meditative serenity and insight.**

Another type is you wish to place your mind on one object and stay with it. For example, I wish to look at the Buddha statue, very clearly looking with eyes wide open. At that moment, you should not think about the following this or that: how harmful is this to me, how much benefit this is. The more you think about it, the more distracted you are. So what should you do? At this moment, your object of meditation is a distinct Buddha statue. In order for your mind to conform “according to your wish,” focus on your inspired object of meditation with stability; this is to achieve meditative stabilization. So in this situation, if your mind is filled with thoughts of this and that, this mind will not be stabilized. This is the time to apply stabilize meditation instead of reflection\*. Within this, the text clearly and explicitly tells us what we should and should not reflect on. These concepts will be discussed in detail in the serenity and insight section [v.3]. So this here is just a brief and simple explanation. Once the principle has been explained, the misconceptions must be refuted. Otherwise, if the grasping of misconception is still there, then everywhere you go, you will be very certain that you are absolutely right, and this is hopeless, hopeless!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 7.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P135, L5]***

**Not knowing this system, some even propound, “If you are a scholar, you only do analytical meditation. Adepts**



**only do stabilizing meditation.” This is not the case, because each must do both.**

There are those who do not understand the above concept, the text says: there are many wise ones who have wisdom, those who are endowed with a wise predisposition. Take us for example now, many abide by the teaching, many abide by faith, many emphasize wisdom, and many emphasize compassion, and so on. So for those who emphasize wisdom, while applying wisdom or even during the application of the six perfections, now one practices the perfection of generosity, later practice the perfection of wisdom, and so forth. For all these kinds of practitioners, an analytical study is required - they need to apply analytical meditation. For the other ones, “adepts”, they only apply stabilizing meditation. What are adepts? Adepts are those who have reached a level of certain conviction in meditation. Then they mindfully meditate, and also apply with an ascetic attitude – forsake everything, abide by the dependent arising conditions like a Dhuta [friar]. Usually in Zen meditation, upon perceiving the chosen analytical topic, then one devotes entire attention without any reservation; this is similar [to stabilizing meditation]. Actually are they [Zen practice and stabilizing meditation] the same? They are not; they are not of the same case. “Each must do both.” Both [analytical and stabilizing meditation], regardless of which one you choose, at the time for stabilization then one should practice stabilizing meditation; at the time for analytical meditation, practice it accordingly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 9.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P136, L2]***

**The scholar must achieve stabilizing meditations such as meditative serenity,**

The former [analytical meditator] also needs to practice stabilizing meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 9.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P136, L4]***

**while the adept must pursue such practices as intense faith in the teacher.**

The latter also requires applying intensified faith [in the teacher], etc. that is when you should reflect and analyze.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 10.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P136, L6]***

**Furthermore, both the sutra section of scripture and the tantra section of scripture very frequently say**

For both of them, regardless of whether it is stabilizing or analytical meditation – in either the Sutrayana or Tantrayana scriptures – these concepts are explained extensively.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 10.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P136, L9]***

**that you must use discernment for both of these methods of meditation. If you lack or are deficient in such analytical meditation, then you will not develop stainless wisdom, the precious life of the path.**

This statement, please pay attention to it! For those things require meditative analysis, you are not analyzing them, without analysis, or deficient in analyzing – just apply very minimally - then a flaw will arise. What kind of flaw?

The “stainless wisdom” will not arise! What is stainless wisdom? What is wisdom? It is to destroy afflictions. The actual eradication of affliction and the precise remedy is wisdom. This wisdom is divided into study, reflection, and meditation. As long as you are on the right track, then affliction can definitely be removed. Otherwise, of course, the effect will not be there! Now here the discussion is about stainless wisdom, what does this stainless wisdom rely on? It all relies on reflection and analysis. So if you lack these [reflection and analysis, stainless wisdom] will not arise. If it will not arise, may I ask: how do you study Buddha Dharma? The true purpose of Buddha Dharma is to act against afflictions. Once afflictions are eliminated, its karmic link is stopped. Without affliction and its related karma, consequently cyclic existence would not exist. This is the vitality\* of the sublime path; just like the source of life, which is the most important thing. This most important requirement for studying Buddha Dharma, surprisingly enough, now you say that you do not need it; may I ask you, how are you going to begin to practice Buddha Dharma?

[\*命根: can be translated as life-faculty or vitality. In Sanskrit it is jivitindriya, which is defined as a mental factor that sustains the life of the citta (mind) and other mental factors it accompanies.]

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 11.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P137, L6]***

So this attitude has been around for a long time! Because of this, thus we are now in the degenerate age of Buddhism. Due to this degeneration, we, therefore, have no other way except to just chant one statement of the Amitabha Buddha’s name [repeatedly]. So with this one phrase of Amitabha Buddha, it is absolutely the best approach for us right now. However, we are mistaken – this

should be the last resort when we have no other option. The reason we end up in this situation is due to the negative causes that were planted in the past. Now we have this understanding, what should we do? As far as my understanding goes, yes! Now we can only recite Buddha's name, but in one's mind, one needs to understand we have planted negative causes before, thus we have this negative effect now. Therefore, now we can only rely on reciting it to quickly reverse these past negative causes. Even though I am not able to apply [meditative-serenity and analytical-meditation] now, but in the future, I must strive at it!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 12.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P137, L12]***

So, in this circumstance, yes, I will continue to recite Buddha's name for now. However, the feeling I have is recognizing the importance of the scriptures with immense embarrassment [that I am not able to understand them]! We should never claim: "Well, scriptures are not needed, why do you even worry about it!" With these two attitudes, what will the effect be? It is very clear. Because you have this very embarrassed attitude now, thus you strive at venerating the scriptures. This embarrassment and veneration are good qualities as well. Not only will they not affect you, rather they can assist with your current practice and help you to be reborn in Pure Land. This is the first one of the immediate benefits. Once you are there [Pure Land], when you practice – since you wholeheartedly look up [to the teachings] – by the time the dependent condition arises, you will be able to practice right away. When you are reborn as human again, this cause remains there, isn't it?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 13.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P138, L3]***

If you don't take this approach, you may say now: well, these scriptures are not needed! This in itself is the greatest defamation of the teaching. You tried so hard to recite Buddha's name a few times to offset [this defamation], more than likely you will still be somewhat over-drafted; and after striving for so long without improvement, this can be thought of as an obstacle. Even if you are able to reach [Pure Land], by the time you are there, because the seed in your mind is to reject it, at that time, even if the teaching is right in front of you, you are still unable to conform to it. You may say that there is no such reference in the scriptures! How can that be? In *the Amitabha Sutra*, the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra*, and the *Sutra of Sixteen Ways of Analysis*, the three sutras of the Pure Land, it is very clearly stated in many sutras and commentaries! Many who have reached Pure Land hear the teachings – they listened to it and then attained arhatship. Why arhatship? They are not concerned about the great sutras and great commentaries! This is one aspect. Moreover, the *Array of Stalks Sutra* says clearly that so many great disciples - sravaka disciples - sat there and, even though Buddha instructed the greatest teachings, yet they did not accord with it. Why? The cause was never planted at the causal stage – one did not like it and are deaf to it – isn't that very simple? Right?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 14.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P138, L12]***

So we must study with great sincerity! Once you are clear about it then you will know, yes! For now, if you are unable to practice, never force it. However, just because you cannot apply it, you should work even harder. Well! By thinking, "I am embarrassed! I will strive harder, and in the future, I will definitely master it." Is this concept clear? Right here is the greatest, biggest difference. Thus, we need to have this recognition! If you can apply accordingly now, even though the wisdom to pinpoint the affliction is

unavailable now, but in the future, you will achieve it easily, advancement is easily available! So for this life-source of the sublime path, we need to hold on to it. Furthermore:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 15.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P139, L2]***

**Even if you develop a little wisdom, it will not be increased greatly.**

Even if you have developed wisdom, it will not increase. Because, if you don't have the cause to increase it, how can you attain the effect of enhancement?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 15.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P139, L4]***

**Therefore, you will not quickly progress along the path,**

Well, so it is like making no headway, [for those] not quitting is considered doing pretty good!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 15.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P139, L6]***

**because the ultimate object that you achieve on the path is the wisdom that differentiates, comprehensively and without confusion, the real nature and diversity of phenomena. As the master Matrceta states, "...omniscience is best amongst wisdoms."**

What is the ultimate objective of the path? What it tells us here is what kind of wisdom? It is the wisdom that knows the true nature and diversity of phenomena. These two are different! One is about the true nature and the other is about the diversity of phenomena; they will be explained later. For our level now: one is to see the characteristics of all phenomena – wisdom of emptiness. The other is to see the dependent arising of all phenomena – the composite

existence. In other words, one is the equipoise that directly perceives the ultimate truth [v.3 p.258 wisdom of emptiness], and the other is nonconceptual sublime wisdom [v.3 p.344 dependent arising]. When both are perfected, it is Buddhahood.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 16.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P139, L11]***

Once you can precisely make an unmistakable determination on every aspect, what is that? That is the wisdom that sees the true nature and diversity of phenomena; both are aspects of wisdom! Wisdom is something that requires your reflection and analysis, thus meditative stabilization is necessary. Because your ability to reflect and analyze is not matured yet, thus you need a stabilized mind to analyze. This is how it works! Now in the very beginning, you have decided that [reflection and analysis] are not needed, wouldn't it be cutting off your vitality of life-source from the very beginning? We need to be very clear about this concept, need to understand distinctly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 17.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P140, L4]***

**Consequently, understand it as a definite sign of having taken the wrong path if no matter how much you cultivate the path, your mindfulness is dulled by obliviousness and you are slow-witted about what to eliminate and what to adopt.**

This statement is a huge warning for us; it is a great reminder for us! Nowadays, many of us applied a lot of cultivation on the path - applied much practice. What does

this amount of practice turn into? Well! It turns into the opposite effect – weighty obliviousness and dull-wittedness. And what about one’s discernment – well, when situations arise, it is not clear to you; you were told to handle it, but you think it is too troublesome – such is the reaction. What is this? This is the sign of taking the wrong path – going down a detour. That is, you have taken a detour at the causal stage! This is where everyone should pay attention. Some listen to the teaching – before listening, the reaction is fine – once they listen, their eyes become wide open. That is the sign that one is in accordance with the causal stage. Some others are fine with normal routine, but upon listening to the teaching, they fall asleep and cannot stay awake. Why? That is the sign of not being in accordance with the teaching. What is happening at that time? That is when obstacles arise.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 18.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P140, L13]***

This is absolutely very plain and clear. If you particularly like something, your eyes will open wide when it appears. Conversely, when you do not agree with something, you will keep yawning, is this right? I believe we all have had this experience. So, for example, of course, since we are ordained, this should not happen. Before we were ordained, at home, during the summer, after a busy day of work, this is the best time to watch TV. And over there the air conditioning is on, and one sits there on the best seat, watching with your eyes wide open! When it’s time to take a bath, “Wait, it’s ok, you go ahead, you go first!” This happens to everyone, one would be just that energized [in watching TV].



***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 18.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P141, L5]***

Conversely, when everyone refers to study, sigh, by that time, this doesn't work for you - toothaches, headaches, or back discomfort - by the time you make it there, you will just doze off. Why? Why is that? This is the [not in accord] attitude! I believe we all have this experience; we don't need to ask the one who dozes off why, because we all have such experience. That is, if you concord with a given object, when the time comes, the spirit is lifted. When you are told to do something, needless to say, you do not want to take a bath, by the time you need to go to bed, "Time to go to bed, otherwise you can't get up tomorrow!" "It's ok, wait, wait, I can get up tomorrow!" Just like that. Even if you are very tired, "Wow, this program is on!" You don't feel tired either, isn't it very obvious? What is that? It is our latent propensity, correct? What is latent propensity? It is the effect of our present state. It is your seed from the causal stage that has matured as the present circumstance.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 19.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P141, L13]***

Thus, if any of us encounter this situation, examine it right away: oh, what is the current state of mind? The best approach is: when this happens, repent immediately - to cleanse it in time. Once you have purified it with confession, the fruitional effects will not occur. Otherwise, letting it continue will bring us very dreadful effects!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 20.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P142, L1]***

**Furthermore, by using discerning wisdom to conduct analytical meditation on the meaning of the scriptures, you understand the many attributes of the good qualities of the three jewels and the like, and you then greatly increase the faith associated with these attributes, etc.**

Moreover, if we know the difference in the merits of the Three Jewels and their specific contents and intricate meanings, then the more understanding we have, the more faith will be enhanced as well. Often, we say, ah! Taking refuge, why do we need to go for refuge? We reply, “Ok.” So we attend a taking refuge ceremony! Nowadays, most people have such an impression: upon taking refuge in the Three Jewels, you will be blessed with many offsprings, long life, and good health. “Well, then go, go, go for it!” But you do not necessarily know the meaning of taking refuge. However, if one knew more about it, one would become more enthusiastic. Let’s not refer to Buddhism, instead of talking about Buddha Dharma, even for the Yi-guan-dao\*, from what I know, they have their own content about how their path has great benefits: now is the degenerate time of the three periods. If you don’t practice their teaching, then when the “astral wind of the degenerate time comes,” so on and so forth, alas, it will be very dreadful. Then you go there and benefit from their teaching. The more you understand it, ah! The more faith you have. That is all relying [on knowing more about the good qualities of the Three Jewels]! So, for our study of Buddha Dharma, the same also applies.

**[\*Yi-guan-dao: is a branch of Chinese folk religion of Xian-tian-dao; aka Way-of-Former-Heaven-sect]**

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 21.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P142, L11]***

Why do I bring up the Yi-guan-dao – it is to describe our states of mind; in other words, every one of us definitely has this state of mind. If you apply it here, then your faith will increase; practice on something else, then the faith toward that will become stronger. Now we want to increase our faith in the Three Jewels, what should we do? Still apply the same approach – talk about the specific benefits of the Three Jewels. What does that rely on? Study and reflection! Isn't it very clear? Therefore, if you say that meditation can do away with study and reflection, how will it work? So this is about how to enhance your faith, what else?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 22.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P143, L1]***

**Also, once you have used analytical meditation to comprehend the many faults of cyclic existence, you develop great disgust for and disenchantment with cyclic existence,**

Conversely, if you can understand more about the great faults and harms of cyclic existence, your disenchantment will arise. So in the previous example, someone tells you, “Do you think he is your good friend? Actually, he is your enemy!” The more you know about this fact, consequently you will loathe him and reject him, isn't that right? This [Buddhism] practice also relies on more of our study, reflection, and analysis. So we certainly should not feel that we understand everything now, then sit there and talk about Buddha Dharma. Based on my understanding right now, whether you understand or not I don't really know; however, I realize that my knowledge is meager – very pathetic, very insufficient! I know too little! So I say this again, and again, honestly, from my heart, I truly don't want to sit here and teach, but my teacher told me: “So and so when you return

you need to teach.” I respect my teacher and I have no choice but to give you teachings. I don’t know enough! Similarly, by measuring myself, I see that most of you are about the same as me. Alas, upon this thought, I am worried about everyone, definitely so!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 23.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P143, L11]***

**and you then see the benefits of liberation from many perspectives. So you then diligently seek liberation.**

By the same token, once you see the sublime benefits of liberation, your aspiration will arise. For now, our greatest obstacle to applying the meditation: first, it is not able to generate pure faith and aspiration [toward the teaching]. Usually, when we engage in other things with great enthusiasm – going on a shopping trip “You are going out? Do you have a car? Let me go with you!” But as for listening to the teaching, “Alas, another class again!” Why? That is due to the lack of arising aspiration, this is the first one. Moreover, the sense of disadvantage is not there; once aware of the faults of the disadvantage, next it will tell us the part about recognizing the advantage of liberation, and then the aspiration will be developed. By thinking about the above [example of wanting to go out for a trip] I just mentioned; I find this attitude is funny too.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 24.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P144, L4]***

**Using this meditation, you even fathom the spirit of enlightenment and the many wondrous activities of the six perfections and so forth. This greatly increases your irreversible faith, aspiration, and joyous perseverance.**

**As all of this is based exclusively on the use of discerning wisdom in order to conduct analytical meditation on the meaning of the scriptures,**

The above tells us, what does all the aforementioned rely on? It all relies on our reflection and analysis. Analyze what? “Scriptures.” Why do we need scriptures? Scriptures are taught by Sages, in other words, the concepts they shared are flawless and are considered accurate and proper. Thus,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 25.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P144, L9]***

**the intelligent should in this manner bring about such certainty that others cannot sway them away from it.**

Please engrave these statements [on the text] in your heart! If I am truly an intelligent person - one who thinks highly of oneself as a smart person, then one should do so. In regard to this concept, first, one should generate a firm understanding to ensure certainty on the perception and not to be swayed. “That others cannot sway them away from it.” Regardless of what others say or whatever environment you are in, never be swayed! By then, our meditation practice will work! Otherwise, by hearing it and thinking that it is reasonable, upon going to a place to hear someone gave a talk, and one listens and might think, “Sure, mine is still right!” You will be stuck in the same state of understanding. So the author tells us: irreversible faith, uncontrived faith! This is very important. To achieve that conviction does not mean to just listen once and that is it; after listening to it, one must apply thorough study, as well as discussion, and then follow it with reflection and analysis. There are so many

things we have to do! And these things will bring us great benefits!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 26.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P145, L3]***

If you cannot grasp this – today hear something and think that it is right. Later you go elsewhere and listen and think something else is pretty good too – it seems right, and then you are swayed. In the end, the little hearing you had over here is wasted, and the hearing over at other place is also wasted! Why? It is due to your doubting! So, naturally, by then there is a saying, “When a hunchback falls down, he can’t touch the ground on either side.” This is just the way it is. You cannot benefit from either one, just like that. This is very, very important! There are too many of us have such an attitude, where we hear from someone and, “Ah, good!” Then we go and hear from another, “This is good too!” Not knowing what to adopt and what to cast aside, well then, it is to no avail and an entire life is wasted, this is the point. Therefore, “bring about such certainty that others cannot sway them away from it.” Absolutely do not be influenced by others.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 27.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P145, L9]***

Here, there is a skillful approach; we might want to think about it this way. Often, people try to persuade you: “So and so, now according to the precept and sutras...” At this point, you should ask yourself: is this person better than Buddha? Is this person better than Bodhisattva? Once you contemplate on it, the issue will be resolved. Furthermore, when you think about this “I,” you also ask: “Am I better than Buddha? Am I better than Bodhisattva?” If you can ask

yourself this, then more or less this type of mistake can be somewhat reduced. Thus, it will help us reverse the attitude. All the way to the point where you have a certain understanding of the proper stainless teachings and form steadfast faith and determination, then that is considered as safe [as not to be influenced]!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P112; 28B, 27.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P146, L1]***

For instance, if you apply the Pure Land practice as the Dharma approach, then there is a greater than 95% possibility of one to be reborn there. Unless you have a tremendous karmic obstacle, otherwise going there is certain. What are the criteria to go to Pure Land? It's simple! Being endowed with both faith and aspiration, right? If you are able to avoid being swayed, may I ask, is this faith and aspiration fulfilled? Sure it is! Absolutely. So, everyone, you do not need to hurriedly engage in reciting Buddha's names now. In my opinion, it is sad for these practitioners [who chant without faith or aspiration]! You might as well stop and engage in this [cultivation of faith and aspiration]. By then, being reborn in Pure Land becomes very easy, and this is the reasoning. Further advancement is even possible, no need to mention the easier achievements. One is possible to be reborn in a higher rank [in Pure Land], not to mention the lesser ranks or even the border region! Not only does this [practice of faith and aspiration] apply to Pure Land, but it also applies to Zen, tenet, and Tantra practices. With this fundamental and complete framework, once you have understood this broader meaning, and then apply it in a stricter sense. Wherever it is practiced, wherever it will work! Just like that. Continue:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 28B, 29.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P146, L8]***

**Those with a very small understanding of how to meditate might say the following:**

***Qualm: If you do too much analysis with discernment and sustain that in meditation, you will hinder your concentration, which is one-pointed upon a single object of meditation. So you will not achieve firm concentration.***

***Reply: I will explain this.***

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P149, L2]***

This statement above is a misconception. Now, there is another type below – one might not necessarily be wrong but one’s view is too narrow, too limited. Well then, what does this type of practitioners say? They say that if you take this analysis with discernment and repeatedly reflect; it will hinder you from achieving concentration. If you want to achieve concentration, you must focus on it one-pointedly. Totally focus your energy on it, which may not necessarily be concentration – thinking about this or that, the mind wanders everywhere and can’t concentrate and the attainment of stabilized concentration will not arise. So the author follows by saying, “I will explain this.” Yes, it will be explained in detail later, you must distinguish clearly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 00.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P149, L8]***

**Concentration allows you to willfully fix your attention on any single object of meditation. If you have not already achieved such concentration, then this**



**concentration will not develop if you attempt to achieve it for the first time while analyzing many objects. Therefore, simply do stabilizing meditation to achieve concentration until you attain it. If this is what you mean by your qualm, then I agree.**

It says that now you wish to fix your attention on an object, focus entirely on that. To achieve this type of concentration – to attain this fundamental Samadhi – which you’ve never studied before, now you just begin to practice this teaching. Since you are studying this right now, of course, your mind has to focus on it. In this situation, if you wish to reflect and analyze, then this concentration will certainly not arise, you will have to wait until you have achieved concentration. So for you to learn concentration now, to mindfully do stabilizing meditation is the right approach, this is correct! Thus “then I agree.” The author also agrees, it is correct and definitely [is our] present situation. The next section is important! The section is extremely important for learning meditative concentration sincerely.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 02.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P150, L7]***

**However, you might assert that if you do too much analytical meditation prior to achieving concentration, you hinder your concentration. If this is the case, then it is clear that you do not understand the way to achieve concentration as it is explained in the commentaries of the great trailblazers.**

Just now, it talks about your actual session, so at the time of the actual session and its preceding preparation, what is the foundation? The foundation is required! The text

says, “prior to achieving concentration,” for you to attain this sublime Samadhi or meditative serenity, then what does the foundation – the preparation – require? One needs to apply the aforementioned qualifications. If you think that the foundation preceding concentration is a hindrance and forsake it, very sorry! You totally don’t understand this great trailblazer. What is this great trailblazer? It is the two lineages. Regardless if it is Nagarjuna’s Profound View or Asanga’s Extensive Deeds, it doesn’t matter which one, all of the complete lineages tell us that, prior to your study of concentration, a lot of basic knowledge is required. These basics need to be contemplated and analyzed. Once you have this foundation, then abide by the object of meditation by building on it, this is how it works. So if you say things like the above, you truly don’t understand the principles of how to develop concentration as taught by these great adepts - you lack the understanding. Next, the explanations will clarify it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 03.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P151, L4]***

**For example, when a skilled smith repeatedly burns gold and silver in a fire and repeatedly washes them in water, they are purified of all their defilements and residues. The gold and the silver then become very soft and pliable. Hence, they are ready to be transformed into whatever ornaments you want, such as earrings.**

Just like a skilled jeweler, before he actually works on it, he first makes a coarse mold. Of course, the gold plate that we have now is the finished product, what is the text referring to then? It is saying that with the gold or mineral sand, once we have them, the first step is to repeatedly melt and wash it to totally remove the defilements and purify it.

Upon it becomes pure gold, and then you make your desired jewelry out of it. By so doing, then it becomes possible to obtain whatever you want it to be. By the same token now, when we study meditative concentration, what should be done?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 04.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P151, L11]***

**Likewise, you initially use your discerning wisdom to meditate repeatedly on faults, such as the afflictions, the secondary afflictions, karmic effects of wrongdoing, and the faults of cyclic existence, according to their order in scripture. This makes you completely displeased or disenchanted. By bringing this to mind, you turn away from the group of nonvirtuous things and clear away these defilements, like burning gold in fire.**

Similarly, when we apply the teachings, first [start with] our afflictions, affliction is a general term – it is either the root afflictions or the secondary afflictions - either the major secondary afflictions, or the medium secondary afflictions, or the small secondary afflictions - all sorts of wrongdoings. Thus, what are all these like? They are just as described below, the negative effect of engaging in wrong deeds, and the faults of cyclic existence, etc. all these categories require applying discerning wisdom to analyze repeatedly. How do we analyze? Think about what great faults they have and what great harm [they will bring]. Once you go through this reflection and analysis, then you will be distressed, alas, in the past I didn't understand this and was fooled by it, and attached to it all day long! That will be when you develop great disenchantment and you will not be bound by it anymore.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 06.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P152, L6]***

What is this is like? This kind of motivation is like the skilled jeweler who uses fire to smelt gold sand. The jeweler uses fire to smelt the gold sand, to remove the impurities from the gold sand. As for those of us practitioners now, by proceeding through the stated reflection and analysis, we develop disenchantment toward our previous attachments. So the first thing in Buddhism is to form disenchantment, to purify the attachment. This is the first one. As for the next,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 06.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P152, L10]***

**Next, you use your discerning wisdom to meditate repeatedly on good qualities, such as the good qualities of the teacher, the great importance of leisure and opportunity, good qualities of the three jewels, virtuous karma and its effects, and the benefits of the spirit of enlightenment, again according to their order in scripture. This causes the mind to become “moist” or clear. Like washing gold in water, bringing this to mind directs the mind toward the virtuous group of phenomena, causes delight, and then moistens the mind with virtues.**

Well then, in the earlier discussion on disenchantment, it talks about its faults. What about other aspects? Regarding all the benefits of the good qualities of the virtuous teachers, the importance of our leisure and opportune human form, then there are the sublime values provided to you by the Three Jewels, as well as many positive effects from your practice of kind deeds, as well as the most inconceivable and remarkable benefits of the spirit

of enlightenment ... They will be covered later. Well, “according to their order in the scripture,” that will be explained later in the text. If you can abide by it to analyze and continuously apply the teachings, then your mind will be “moistened.” Ah, how joyful! You definitely won’t be like how we are now: when hearing about going to class you immediately feel disagreeable. At that time, upon hearing that the class is on, your ears will be alert and eyes wide open, and won’t fall asleep. That is the teaching that moistens our minds and that will be when we develop pure faith – you will not have any doubt. What is it like? It is just like “bringing this to mind,” this kind of reflective awareness is like purifying the gold sand with water, just like the skilled jeweler using water to clean the gold. So when we apply the teaching, utilize this kind of “virtuous group of phenomena” to cleanse our contaminations.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 08.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P153, L8]***

**Once this happens,**

Once you have that preparatory foundation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 08.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P153, L10]***

**focus your mind on what you want to achieve—either meditative serenity or insight—and you will accomplish it without difficulty.**

Once you’ve established the preceding foundation, by then, as you will apply meditative stabilization and you will achieve concentration. When you practice analytical meditation, or meditate on emptiness and so on, “without

difficulty,” you do not need much effort and you “will accomplish it” with success! Now, let’s see, is that right? What is the reason that we often cannot apply it successfully? If we are willing to examine carefully, then we will know right away! It is that our minds are filled with afflictions. What are we afflicted by? Won’t let go! That is it. And then, another aspect is that our spirits are not lifted! Why can’t we let go? You haven’t seen the faults and harms of these objects. You only see the beginningless latent propensity from the past. After meditation, you become disenchanted. Even if you are handed these objects for free, you don’t even want it. Is there anything you can’t let go of? So this mind state has arisen. Moreover, if you are unable to lift [your spirit], once you see a specific benefit now, well, even if you were told don’t do it is impossible! Just like what I have mentioned, “time to go to bed now!” “Well! It doesn’t matter; I will wait a little bit.” You just can’t let go [of the study and contemplate]; you have tasted the flavor of its benefit. Isn’t this very explicit and clear? Furthermore, the obstacle ahead is cleared, the force pushing you forward is powerful. While practicing the teaching with the proper method, how can success be impossible? Of course, you will succeed!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 10.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P154, L7]***

So we often say this now, oh well, I am about to meditate! Going to stay in a shack! Then stay there for ten years. The best outcome is that you slept there for ten years, what a pity! The concept is right in here. Although the framework has been explained, the details are still unknown to us. When you sincerely continue with the study, you will find it more and more intriguing; not only intriguing, also gradually, gradually you will spontaneously concord with every part of the content. What is the effect of concordance?

You will have achievement, just like that. If you are inspired to be reborn to Pure Land that will certainly happen. Moreover, attaining Buddhahood is absolutely possible. This is why, when you read the *Biography of Venerable Atisha*, at his time, there are adepts achieving every day. It happened everywhere! Whereas for us now? Alas, the instructors of the scriptures are as numerous as schools of fording carps in the river - as many as the hairs on a cow. Yet true adepts were as scarce as the horn of the Chinese unicorn! The issue is that we don't have skillful means; the problem is that we do not have the proper approach. Now with this recognition of ours, it is not difficult to genuinely meditate on the teaching; yet the most critical part is proper perception!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 11.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P155, L1]***

**Therefore, such analytical meditation is the superior method for achieving nondiscursive concentration.**

Oh! Now that we know that the earlier text taught us to reflect and analyze, which is the most skillful method for us to achieve nondiscursive concentration – the best tool! Whereas, if you forsake this method and do away with the tool, may I ask, how can you practice? Even right now, for something as simple as cooking rice, you say you want to cook rice, yet throw away the pot. Without the pot, how are you going to cook? If you don't use fire, how can you cook without fire? You don't want water, how do you cook without water? That is how we are now – we need rice, it needs to be cooked, yet pot is not needed, water is not needed, even fire is not needed either. Now we understand it here, as long as we abide by it, all will appear as we wish and achievement is certain.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 12.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P155, L8]***

**In the same way, the noble being Asanga says:**

**For example, in order for smiths or their skilled apprentices to purify silver or gold of all defilements and impurities, they burn it in fire and wash it in water. By doing this, they understand that they can make it into this or that ornament by way of its serviceability and pliability. Then those who know the appropriate craft—the smiths and their skilled apprentices—use the smiths’ tools to transform the metal into whatever kind of ornament they want.**

This is to explain that, just like the jeweler or his apprentices, for the sake of making one ornament, he uses all sorts of methods to wash and smelt [the gold] in the fire to purify all defilements and impurities. Then, based on his experience the designed ornaments are made.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 13.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P155, L14]***

**Likewise, yogis and yoginis become disenchanted by simply not turning their mind toward any impurities or defilements such as covetousness.**

Now for those of us who are serious about applying the teachings, if you can abide by the aforementioned approach to meditate, then those objects that we usually attached to will be removed and you will develop disenchantment. Once disenchantment is generated, these contaminations, worries, and afflictions will not remain. Usually, our immediate afflictions at present time, if you examine it closely, what are



they like? They are all these, all included in these [contaminations, worries, and afflictions]! Oh, he ate too much, he took advantage of the situation, and I did more! Well, such and such over here, etc. Furthermore, he is playing the Dharma instrument wrong, and that other thing he did is so on and so forth! If we actually recognize the true reality of worldly phenomena, once your disenchantment arises – ah! For the sake of studying Buddha Dharma now, I want to increase my merits.... Regardless of what the situation is, your mind does not fluctuate. Naturally, you will not be tainted by contaminations, worries, and afflictions. Once your mind is not impacted, your afflictions will disappear. And then?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 14.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P156, L9]***

**They create delight simply by not turning toward the unhappiness of the afflicted mind and by being inclined toward joy in the group of virtues.**

At the same time, now with your recognition of the sublime merits of the Three Jewels, wholeheartedly, ah, you sense great joy! The obstacle ahead is gone, and the driving force from behind is very strong.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 15.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P156, L12]***

**When they do this,**

The next step is for us practitioners.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 15.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P157, L1]***

**their minds become linked to and calmly settled upon—without fluctuation or movement—any object to which they apply them within the scope of serenity or insight.**

By then, during the actual meditation session, apply either stabilizing meditation or analytical meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 15.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P157, L3]***

**They then can use their minds to properly attain whatever objective for which they aim.**

At that time, for those who “use their minds to properly attain,” then you will be totally aligned. If you want to settle [on a given object], it will happen, [your mind] will not fluctuate or be moved, and all your aspirations can be achieved! Is this example clear? Now, with this understanding, this is however still a theory! Here, this concept is for us to develop aspiration and once you have this joyful aspiration, then you will naturally become earnest toward the following stages on the path. So, now the joyful aspiration is cultivated. Once you clearly recognize the following steps, one by one, just like the text has stated, the arising mind state will appear and the achievement will gradually take place.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 16.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P157, L9]***

Please turn to [page 115]. Regarding meditation, the text briefly explains the guidelines for practice. So this is divided into two parts: the first clarifies what meditation is,

gives a brief explanation. Then it refutes the misconception of one kind of attachment. Here, refuting misconceptions are particularly important – for our present situation in general, there are too many of these misconceptions, too many of them. Often, we hear sayings like: need to meditate, hurry up to learn the seated lotus position, or hurry up to learn something else! In fact, now we have studied the above section, we understand the cause for why we do not concord after sitting there for a long time – we may have some idea. Now let's continue, the second to the last paragraph:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 17.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P158, L1]***

**Laxity and excitement are the two principal conditions that are unfavorable for attaining a concentration wherein the mind steadfastly stays upon one object of meditation.**

It says, with this Samadhi, that is meditative concentration. We usually refer to it as achieving concentration, attaining concentration, or being focused, calm abiding, Samadhi, etc. What is the sign of Samadhi? That is when our minds abide upon a given object of meditation, and the mind is steadfast can't be fluctuated under any circumstance, not to be influenced or disturbed. Thus this is the attainment of being steadfast and staying upon one object of meditation – the sublime Samadhi. So once one truly achieves this concentration, even if you lift the meditator up and put him somewhere else, he would not know. No matter how cold it is he would not know; no matter how hot it is he would not know either; no matter how noisy it is he would not know either. His mind is steadfast on the object of meditation. Regardless of what you do to him, he

does not know, such is the sign! That's how it is! Such is the admirable state.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 19.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P158, L8]***

So now we wish to learn [meditation], but there are two obstacles or unfavorable conditions that are contradictory [to meditative concentration]. Primarily, there are “two principal conditions,” they are the main ones. What are the two? They are laxity and excitement. “Laxity” is what we usually know as lethargy. “Excitement” is attached to distraction. So what is laxity? What is excitement? Lethargy is the force of the mind that gradually, gradually becomes weaker, that is when “the mind becomes not serviceable.” For example, usually, when you see an object or hear something, if you really want to listen, the attention will be focused on it explicitly and clearly. Up to a point, the mind will no longer want to listen to you – this is laxity.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 19.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P158, L14]***

This laxity does not necessarily mean that you sit here and, when you doze off, that is laxity. When you are reading a book, in the beginning, you are quite sharp but, later even though your eyes are still reading and the mind is still working, you are confused about what the book says. That is when you are already in laxity. We should know for this laxity, that the subtler level of laxity is something we are totally unable to detect. Actually, while applying meditative concentration, by then your mind feels great, abide on it. In fact, you have already entered into laxity. In the usual practice of seated meditation, the eyes do not need to be shut; the eyes can be slightly open. However, you will feel

that the eyes seem to be shut, and the feeling of shutting the eyes is more comfortable. By then, actually, the mind is already falling into laxity. This subtle sign of laxity is impossible for us to detect. Once you have detected it, it is already too late, that is how it works. So we often are in the midst of laxity and even feel good about it. By the time one dozes off, then one has no idea how far off it is. So the sign of laxity is quite hard to distinguish.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 21.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P159, L9]***

The other kind is excitement, which is a type of distraction. However, what is this distraction? Actually, it is the sign of disturbance within. Some think of it as being “endowed with attachment.” Why do they think of it this way? That is because, internally, you have this predisposed thought about those favorable objects in the past and, at that time, your mind cannot be tranquil. This state is excitement. It will not bring us calm abiding. To sum it up in one statement: in other words, when your mind is high, it is called excitement; when it sinks that is when it slides downward – laxity. So you cannot reach the state of meditative concentration. These are the greatest obstacles. Regarding the actual detailed content, it will be explained in the serenity section in [v.3] with great detail.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 22.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P160, L1]***

Here, the text points out the obstacles to learning concentration and tells us how to apply the remedy. Once we have this concept and abide by the following systematic order to study, we will be very pleased. Why? As a matter of fact, the following sections will help us to study the

necessary foundation for concentration step by step. Otherwise, we will still rush, ah, need to learn meditative concentration, don't need [the foundation]. Under this circumstance, since you don't have the foundation for meditative concentration, you try for so long, and it is totally wasted! So here the key point being explained is the importance of the foundation. Thus, as long as we are willing to start from the foundation and abide by the systematic order to advance step by step, once the foundation is established and understood then, later when learning meditative serenity, all you have to do is to identify the signs of laxity and excitement. You will be able to immediately apply [the teachings] accordingly and quickly achieve meditative concentration. Continuing:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 23.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P160, L8]***

**With respect to this, if you have a very forceful and long-lasting awareness of the good qualities of the three jewels and the like, you will easily eliminate laxity. Many authorities state that the remedy for laxity is uplifting the mind by means of seeing good qualities.**

So let's look at them separately. What is the remedy for both laxity and excitement? It says if you have following force, what force? It is your recognition of the good qualities of the Three Jewels and seeing their sublime merits. Other than seeing the merits of the Three Jewels, what else requires mental preparation? "A very forceful and long-lasting awareness." Forceful means that the power in your mind is very strong, and long-lasting means that there is no interruption. Thus, in this state of mind, laxity is easily purified and eliminated. We can readily use one thing to illustrate this. For example, there is something we like very

much – one of our established hobbies – in this situation, maybe sometimes you feel dispirited or even drowsy. Wow! All of a sudden, when this object arises, your mind will therefore quickly get excited. You should subsequently contemplate and analyze your own interests and hobbies, and you will immediately relate to it and recognize it right away.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 25.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P161, L4]***

Many worldly people have specific hobbies, when they talk about their hobbies, wow! They are immediately energetic. Even they have any minor illness, toothache, or a headache, when they get to that point, they don't feel the pain. So we often tell a joke of how much kids love candy. Even if he has a toothache, when he sees candy with his aching tooth, the tooth no longer hurts. Actually, this mentality is common to everything we do. Why? Just by seeing something you enjoy and thinking about its benefits, it creates something forceful and strong in your mind. Long-lasting means, when this force is extremely strong or you habituate it often enough, no other force can interrupt it. That is the [long-lasting] force.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 26.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P161, L10]***

Thus, what should we do now? The above is what we need to do. Why is it that we are following the preceding order step by step – although we talk about taking refuge to the Three Jewels, what are the benefits of going for refuge to the Three Jewels? Honestly speaking, most people may not truly recognize it. That is absolutely true. Once you have experienced it, the mental force will be very strongly upheld.

When this powerful mindset is developed, if you were about to fall asleep, naturally it will not happen – [the drowsiness] is removed. Therefore, next, the author provides us with the remedy, the remedy for laxity - the accurate way of pinpointing the healing of laxity. What is it? That is the mind that can recognize the benefits. Upon seeing the benefit, this mentality will actually become an encouragement, and the mind is immediately uplifted and elevated - this is the conceptual description.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 27.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P162, L2]***

Next, there are two statements from “many authorities.” The so-called “authorities” means that they are accurate and flawless. All great masters of the past gave such [authoritative] instructions. Thus, who does “many authorities” refer to? They are not only those with clear scripture perceptions but are also endowed with the experiential knowledge acquired by practicing according to the scripture perceptions. In other words, the reports of their experience are absolutely flawless – those experienced, accomplished masters all said the same. This is the conceptual reasoning, yet in reality it is supported by infallible validation. This is with regard to the remedy for laxity. Next, is the remedy for excitement.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P114; 29A, 27.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P162, L7]***

**Likewise, if you have a very forceful and long-lasting awareness of the faults of impermanence, suffering, and the like, you will easily eliminate excitement. Many scriptures say that disenchantment is praised as the**



## **remedy for excitement because excitement is a mental distraction involving attachment.**

Similarly, if we can have a forceful and long-lasting awareness, then what kind of understanding is needed? Recognize the faults and flaws of impermanence, suffering, and the like in the mundane world. By then, this excitement will be easily eliminated. Why? The reason for excitement is that you see this object and think it is great and it is good! Thus, the attachment dominates, and your imagination runs wild. Now, seeing that this object actually is good for nothing and has great faults. If you were told not to eliminate it, you can't help but remove it. So what is the direct antidote for this? Disenchantment. And "impermanence and suffering" are the best remedy to become disenchanted. The reason you are not able to renounce it is that you see its advantage. Now that you see its great faults, of course, you will be disenchanted. Hence, all scriptures praise and expound on this in all aspects. Scriptures are actually the reports from Buddhas and Bodhisattvas about their own experiences – those experienced ones share the same recognition. So, from here, we will know that, as long as you are able to cultivate these two [to counter laxity and excitement], then naturally when you are meditating and laxity arises, well, analyze [the good qualities of the Three Jewels] and the mind is immediately uplifted. Once excitement arises, immediately switch to analyze [impermanence or suffering], and immediately calm the mind, it becomes pacified. In this situation, the meditative concentration will naturally become very easy to attain.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 00.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P165, L1]***

**Therefore, you will easily attain the firm concentrations which please the learned to a degree commensurate with your cultivation of the trainings, beginning with faith in the teacher and ending with the engaged spirit of enlightenment.**

So from here we can recognize all the way from the earlier step by step sequence: beginning with relying on the teacher, cultivating faith in the teacher, and even continue to abide by this sequential order on the path: leisure and opportunity, followed by reflect on suffering, then taking refuge, and cause and effect, all the way until generating the aspiration for the spirit of enlightenment - both aspirational attitude and engaging in actual deeds...apply all of these stages stepwise. However much effort you put forth in these, the comparable effect will be yours in the future. With the effect, you will quickly succeed in your chosen practice. This degree of our sublime Samadhi will please all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas – they are the ones who have true wisdom. This is very clear.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 01.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P165, L8]***

**Not only must you sustain stabilizing meditations after you become free of both excitement and laxity, but you must also sustain analytical meditations.**

The above is about the training of concentration, Samadhi. Actually, not only does the above apply, but even if you cultivate analytical meditation – the actual cultivation of both meditative stabilization and insight – this analytical meditation must be free of laxity and excitement for it to work. Although we have not seriously engaged deeply in practicing serenity and insight, we have the approximation

of them now. What is the approximation of serenity and insight? That is, your mental intention goes in the same direction. For example, our usual study here is to read books mindfully and analyze the concepts. At that time, if our mind is wandering and our thoughts are wild, thinking of this, “Wow, this is pretty good” and you can’t let it go, then the effort of your reading will not be effective. Afterwards, you might feel: well, the flash of that mental clarity and sharpness is over, even reading with eyes wide open, the mind is totally muddled and you cannot read well. So what are these two conditions? The former is excitement and the latter is laxity. So when you have excitement and laxity, the effect is the same, you cannot read well, this is the analytical aspect. From the above, we know that, regardless of whether it is stabilized meditation or analytical meditation, the sustaining concept is the same.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 02.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P166 L9]***

So, honestly speaking, this concept does not become useful until later when you are about to study serenity and insight. At our present stages of study and reflection, and even with anything you do, if you are sincere about doing it well, your mind first has to be clear and sharp. If you have a clear and sharp mentality, definitely both serenity and insight are included; primarily the main obstacles for these are laxity and excitement. From here we should realize that the very first step is this. Thus, for now, the aforementioned stages are as such. If we don’t abide by the proper systematic order, it would be a great loss. This is the key reason that makes great teachers stand out.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 03.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P166 L15]***

Therefore, here we often discover a very interesting fact: many come to the [monastery] to study here – their goal to study is proper – however, the approach they use is usually totally mistaken. How so? They come hastily and claim, “I want to learn this, and you have to teach me this.” Actually, with such an attitude, if one has this mentality, obviously he is making a big mistake, a very obvious mistake. What big mistake? Let’s think it over – I have mentioned it before. Here, I will use an example. When we are sick and what should we do? Find a good doctor, and pay him a visit by asking, “Doctor, what is this illness that I have? Please examine it and then prescribe the medicine based on your diagnosis. I will follow your prescription to try to cure my illness by taking the medication accordingly.” Isn’t this the way it should be? Anyone disagree? Certainly, it’s right! So you go there just for him to diagnose your illness, and the doctor’s prescription is based on his diagnosis. In the above scenario, what are we doing? We are pretty much going there and saying, “Doctor! I need a certain medication, you just give it to me!” So this is saying, are you seeking for the help from the doctor or what? Let’s reflect on it, isn’t it? Many came here and think, “Alas, I want to study this, yet you gave me that, thus it is not to my liking.” If it does not match my liking, honestly there is no need to come here for earnest study. Everyone should be clear on this concept.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 05.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P167 L12]***

Of course, in general, it is possible that the teacher may not have the proper qualifications. In fact, with this condition, we may likely say, “Sure! Because nowadays teachers are not qualified, thus we react like this!” If you look at it on a superficial level, there is nothing wrong with it. But if you take a deeper look, why is it that you can’t come

across a perfectly qualified teacher? Why is it that your karma leads to such an inexplicable environment? Is there any worldly thing that just drops down from the sky? Does anything happen by coincidence? No. We Buddhists understand that, no, everything has a certain cause that leads to an associated effect. Because, in the causal stage of my past lives, I didn't plant the proper cause, therefore today the proper effect did not arise.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 06.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P168 L3]***

If, in this situation, you are not working on introspection to purify yourself by paying respect to teachers, and even say, "Oh! When I open my eyes to look around, there is no one suitable to teach [me]." Studying Buddha Dharma with this attitude is likely to deviate further away. Yes, when first entering [the path], we may encounter various flawed influences; these concepts definitely could be developed. However, after we sincerely step further into the study of Buddha Dharma, this is what we should truly recognize. Moreover, it is important for one to purify one's flaws. Otherwise, you will grasp on it and unable to improve such personal mistaken view; then it is hopeless, and you will stray further and further with more and more distance apart. Therefore, this clarification is brought up in passing to ensure our peace of mind when we advance gradually according to the step-by-step stages. Continue.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 07.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P168 L10]***

**Because of this, the knowledgeable gurus of the lineage that handed down these personal instructions conveyed a clear understanding of whatever object of**

**meditation they transmitted. In order to do this, they first thought over the meaning of the appropriate passages from both the sutras and the commentaries in light of their guru's personal instructions. Enriching their presentation with the sayings of former gurus, they comprehensively explained the topic of meditation.**

Well, now that the preceding foundations have been clearly explained, what is the proper approach? What are the flaws? Both positive and negative have been explained, thus there are no omissions and everything is included. As for the pros and cons, I have already discussed them last time and, later during the process of our actual practice of Buddha Dharma, they are very crucial, very important. Usually, too many of our flaws are like this: we lack complete comprehension of the benefits, and totally do not know about the faults. So in this situation, what are the advantages and disadvantages? I will specify them here. The advantages can also be considered as the expedient approach. If the approach presented is to your liking, very well, when you abide by it, this is indeed an advantage – it won't take too much of your time to probe and explore. It is extremely convenient; most people like to take this route. Is it effective? Absolutely effective! In the end, you will definitely achieve Buddhahood. However, this is a distant path, the length of this route is hard for you to imagine. You have no idea when you will get there!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 08.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P169 L6]***

Just think – your one recitation of “Namo Buddha” means eventual achievement of Buddhahood. Needless to mention that we have chanted more than just one recitation of “Namo Buddha!” However, this path is certainly the long

one. Besides, if we analyze it step by step, I believe that I have always been on the long route in the past. Also, I noticed that everyone sitting here, almost with no exceptions, everyone is on this distant route. Everyone grasps onto one's personal preferences tightly, just like that. This can be considered as the advantage. What about the disadvantage? That is the distant route mentioned above.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 09.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P169 L11]***

Well, then what should you do? The first step now is to understand the complete picture of the positive aspect. Is this enough? Not enough. There is also the faulty opposing aspect, which should be recognized thoroughly as well. And then, within this, you take the appropriate path. By that time, it certainly will not be to your liking. Why? Because the reason why we humans are ordinary beings is that ordinary beings are endowed with these two aspects of: afflictive view and afflictive sentiment, the root of these is subtle afflictions and ignorance. Usually, our views are flawed; our latent propensity and preferences are flawed. Otherwise, Buddha would not have the need to impart teachings and Buddha would not be qualified to be Buddha. For this we should understand: we are in the midst of great ignorance. Thus, we Buddha Dharma practitioners should definitely avoid this and never yield to our latent propensities. First, we have to know the content of our study. And then, go one step further to identify the flaws in our latent propensities – abide by what is proper for you to practice, then this is appropriate.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 10.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P170 L4]***

Let me give a simple example now: for instance, let's take a random machine, you claim that the machine is ready, can be used. However, there are many caveats where you are not truly certain, not sure yet. In this circumstance, if the machine doesn't start, well, you can be said to be very lucky because it did not work. Since it can't start, thus it has caused no damage. At most, you have wasted your efforts. If it does start, but there is a defect inside that you don't know about, by the time it is halfway down the process, once it breaks down, you can do nothing about it because of its poor condition. If it were a car on the street, at the most you might have some delay, maybe stop or something else. If this car were to explode, it would take your life. If it were a boat, then it would be very dangerous, very risky. Whereas, if it is an airplane, death would be certain. Think about it, right? Thus, this concept you definitely have to keep in mind.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 11.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P170 L12]***

Take a random example, using the above case, you may ask, "Well, how can that be? If it were leaking, how did it start? Would it have even started?" Yes! True, if there were a serious problem, it will not start; whereas if there were minor issues it may still be able to. Now let me pick any case, say the engine of the car uses a motor with cylinders. The material for the cylinder should meet a certain standard, yet you overlooked it and used something that is not up to the standard. In the beginning, it seems pretty good but, after it has started for a while and it gradually heats up, then the cylinder becomes deformed by the heat. It cannot survive [the heat]. Actually, the situation has already changed, right? You are already flying in the air [as in the case of the airplane] and the cylinder becomes deformed, may I ask, what will happen then? Isn't this very



obvious! Therefore, we have too many such situations; each of you must contemplate and analyze this concept. From the conditions that I see now, it is more or less like this. This is also my own miserable experience. Thus, regarding the actual apparent attitude, we will save it for our review; I will point them out one by one. I sincerely hope that everyone can recognize it within [our mental stream], and that would be the most fortunate thing in this life of ours.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 12.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P171 L6]***

Therefore, the author says next, there are these complete personal instructions passed down from the “knowledgeable gurus” mentioned earlier. As for those adepts, not only were they endowed with precise reasoning, but they also had the actual experiential knowledge. They not only had the actual experiential knowledge but also were definitely flawless. For those past Bodhisattvas and adepts, regardless of whatever “instruction” is given, as long as it accords with us and conforms to us, for those that we need to learn, one needs to aspire to have “clear understanding.” We should form an uncontrived precise understanding, and this proper understanding will definitely not be randomly influenced. So in this situation, what is the author saying? “They first thought over the meaning of the appropriate passages from both the sutras and the commentaries in light of their guru’s personal instructions.” First, [great teachers] point out the main content, and then followed by quoting sutras and commentaries. Moreover, take another step closer to the sayings of former gurus – the words of the former gurus come from their experiential knowledge. So this principle is first explained, after the explanation, sutras and commentaries are cited to validate the concepts. Next, it is followed by referring to the deeds of these adepts and

Bodhisattvas as the actual role models exemplifying the sutras and commentaries. This is how it works!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 14.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P171 L15]***

Then what do we do with these teachings? It is for us to form an uncontrived recognition, this is the genuine ornament for us. That is the true recognition that we should have in mind, and that is when we can eradicate the three poisons of attachment, anger, and ignorance in our minds. What is the ornament of our mind streams now? Rubbish [the 3 mental poisons]. So the perfect teaching is to instruct us in this complete way. Once we have the understanding, then apply accordingly, naturally, the advancement is stepwise and it is steadfast. It is easy to say, however it is very important, extremely crucial, absolutely important! Whether you can achieve it or not, whether your achievement is direct or deviating, rely on these key points here at every turn.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 15.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P172 L6]***

So here we definitely don't want to engage in such things like when I go to a store, I am shopping, and I want this. Average people in today's world might even go to the store and throw a fit. I recall when I was young; I once heard a saying, a common expression in the business world. This person went to a store to buy things, picked on this and that for a while. In the end, he didn't like anything, so he said to the storeowner, "Do you know the buyer is like your father!" This is our local dialect – the "father" means both the buyer and the customer. That is, the customer is paying for it. Since the buyer comes here to give you business, so they

are essentially like your parents who clothe and feed you. Thus they are like your father. So the shop owner was yelled at, that was the case.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 16.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P172 L13]***

Now many of us Dharma practitioners also have this tendency, this is how the world is. The students go to school. In the past, we would pay respect to the teachers – we don't even know why we did that, just abide by it. Nowadays, this is not emphasized. Instead, we talk about freedom and openness. Besides, students come here with this attitude: "You should give me what I want! Otherwise... then the teacher would get berated. If I didn't come to buy from you, you wouldn't be able to make a living!" If everyone held on to this concept, alas! What hope is there for Buddha Dharma?

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 16.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P173 L3]***

If you have a true understanding and you have the experience, then why do you bother coming here to learn? If you don't have any experience, what can you learn with this attitude? This concept is so very simple! Everyone think it over, is it right? So in this situation, everyone shouldn't just think that as long as it is to my liking then it's fine, that is completely wrong. What are these two things that are me and my preferences? They are the afflictive view and afflictive sentiment. Hence, many came [to the monastery] and said: well, I want it to be this way and I wish to meditate in this way! Of course, for beginners, I can understand this painful experience and I was like that as well before. Hence, I always calmly respond: fine, fine, fine! Afterwards, [I would]

use all sorts of skillful means to go along with you. Gradually, gradually the transformation will happen in the future. Now, with time you will recognize the concept, which is right here, and what was just explained. While discussing refuting misconceptions, we need to recognize what is wrong in our minds, and this is when our proper application is on the right track.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 17.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P173 L11]***

**They also said that success is more difficult for those who contemplate on their own than for those who transform their minds in a classroom, where those who know how to explain the teachings do so for those who know how to listen.**

Well, this is the statement that past adepts often said. They said a truly skillful teacher is what they mean by “those who know how to explain the teachings,” and “those who know how to listen” – which is the attitude of qualified students. These two qualifications are very important! These two qualifications are very essential. If one of them is absent, then the condition is incomplete - it would not be encompassing. If both are completely present, and the teaching is genuinely delivered, then this Dharma assembly will be very successful. And this Dharma assembly will have a tremendous impact. I believe we all have this experience. There is this teaching here today, well, this instruction! Not only was the instruction excellent, but the audience was also touched. After listening, the feeling of it still lingers in our minds for three days. Much like attending a concert, the feeling afterwards is: ah, it was so beautiful! For three whole days afterwards, you still hear it and it does not fade away,

as special as that. Thus, if you try to develop this kind of effect alone, it is not going to happen.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 19.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P174 L7]***

**This statement is excellent and true.**

Next, the author said: right! Absolute no mistake, totally unmistaken, this is absolutely true. All the past adepts and Bodhisattvas came through with this experience. Here we can also understand that those adepts and Bodhisattvas were reincarnated practitioners. Even they have to go through this process, now we beginners are surprisingly not taking this path. May I ask you, until when, what year will you succeed? Thus, we often say: “Alas, I am an ordinary being!” It is exactly because you are an ordinary being, you need to strive even harder! Even those reincarnated adepts and Bodhisattvas are traversing this path with such an attitude, whereas you as an ordinary being are forsaking the effort, then what can you learn? This is why we should truly be more vigilant!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 20.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P174 L14]***

Thus, later as for this aspect, I also hope everyone follows what I did. I have also made this comment before: “Alas, Dharma Master! I am only an ordinary being!” Well, now I have changed my perception. This statement is not wrong for I am an ordinary being! In the past, when I referred to this ordinary being, I felt that since I am only an ordinary being, you should not demand so much from me, just let me get by! The last two statements were left behind. As for now, I made what kind of change? It is: I am an

ordinary being, since even noble beings have to apply such efforts, I must urge myself to strive quickly! So, “Dharma Master, I do wish you can help me. If I become lazy, please encourage me.” Hence, I am still the same ordinary being, but the following statements are quite different. Therefore, I would like to bring up this point to encourage everyone. Continuing,

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 21.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P175 L7]***

**Therefore, it is improper to say, “Now is the time for meditation,” and then solely do a little meditation, for the saying “a time for study and reflection and a time for practice” expresses the misconception that extensive explanation of the teaching is not compatible with the context of practice.**

Therefore as mentioned before, don’t wait until we are about to meditate and then be encouraged. Instead, what should we do? Based on your previous foundation, sturdily strive at solidifying it; once it is solidified then your application in sitting meditation won’t take you too long to have an achievement. So for now, do not claim, “I want to meditate. Dharma Master, please tell me, how do I recite Buddha’s names with a one-pointed mind? Please tell me how to apply meditative stabilization?” No, not like that. The aforementioned specifically tells you the foundation of how to help you recite Buddha’s names with one-pointed attention. It tells you the exact prerequisites to attain meditative concentration. Not only do we have to understand the teaching now, once we understood, we also need to strive at applying it. It’s not about knowing it and just thinking about it lightly while meditating on it; this kind of understanding is of no use!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 22.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P176 L2]***

For example, let's not talk about our Sutrayana practice, for in Sutrayana right now the teaching is already weakening; thus, when discussing practice, well, that is fine, just recite Buddha's names, perhaps a verse of Amitabha Buddha – everything else can wait until one reaches Pure Land. As for Tantrayana, this teaching is for attainment in this lifetime. So the transmitted teachings are all very important for attainment in one lifetime. Thus, prior to each teaching, there always is a foundation – the preparation. And this preparation must go through each and every part one by one. A complete sequence begins by relying on the teacher, at least these are always included: renunciation, impermanence, and spirit of enlightenment. Whereas for us now, we just read it through once, go over it once and think that it is enough. Here, the text says, “solely do a little meditation,” more or less you know how to be encouraged by the teaching – you know enough to motivate yourself. Yet surprisingly, now that we say that this is the most superb teaching, we don't even know the meaning of it. We just read it through once and say that I will study the superb teaching here. How pathetic it is to talk about!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 23.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P176 L11]***

So many people now, well, they heard about the teaching – there is a great Rinpoche coming, so let's hurry up to receive a powerful initiation. This is useless! I believe, up to this point, at least we now know the basic concepts. When I refer to it as useless, it does not mean planting virtuous roots are useless. This is of great benefit, and

virtuous roots should be planted. Now, what does this reference of being useless mean? Wow, this is a method for achievement in one lifetime! In your current state, it's definitely not possible to engage in and wish for achievement in one lifetime. This is what it means. Everyone should distinguish this clearly.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 23.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P177 L1]***

So now that we understand, well, with the previous wrongful discernment that these practices are for during study and reflection of the teaching, it is not needed at meditation time! What is this perception? This is a grave mistake, a serious one. Now we have covered the fundamental concept. Continuing on:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 24.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P177 L4]***

**However, those who know how to bring all these explanations into practice seem barely to exist at all.**

However, to truly understand that all sutras and commentaries are for the purpose of practice is very rare – very few people, this kind of practitioners are very rare, too rare! So what is the cause? The cause is due to our latent propensities from beginningless time. Our latent propensities are absolutely like that; you have such attachments, [and you are] grasping on the views and sentiments. Whatever we encounter, ah! This is what I wanted. This attitude was already there before applying the teachings. Moreover, once you step forward to practice and applied a little, alas, the more attachment there is! Therefore, I truly feel this is very pitiful. Thus, to properly take on the



path, the best approach is still beginning with the “tenet sect.” So does it mean that the “Zen meditation school” is inferior? No! We have to recognize the stages. Meaning, from the moment we set our foot on the path, all the way until completion; in the beginning, it is best to start from tenet study. And then, once you are at a certain level, by then when one is certain about the entire encompassing teaching, you can then focus specifically on meditation.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 25.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P177 L14]***

So in this situation, from the perspective of this one lifetime of ours, it won't necessarily happen. For our whole process on the path, to say the least, it will take three great eons, and that is an astronomical figure. It is hard to know how long it is. If you take one small section, it is very likely in that short span you spent the entire lifetime on learning meditation, just like that. Therefore, in this circumstance, we need to know, with regard to achieving the entire path, at the beginning, you need to have a complete understanding, and then advance on it. What is the difference? Here I will specifically clarify it today, this concept is very important, too important!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 26.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P178 L5]***

If we do not have this proper understanding, by the time we begin study meditation, we may not have an attachment prior to practicing the teaching. We may think that it is not too bad, at least we are not attached to the secular world, and we [monastics] are able to renounce it. And then we step forward to meditate. During the actual session, either you recite Buddha's names or practice Zen meditation.

Once you have experienced its pleasure, you think that is so wonderful, just like that, and you will not want to give it up, you'll be unwilling to let go of it. Needless to say, your approach will not lead to achievement and, even if it did, it would be difficult to remove this Dharma attachment [before having proper understanding of the entire framework]. It will stay with you all the way to the end. Once you have reached the end and attain the effect, then Buddha will tell you: "Even though you attained Arhatship, this is not the ultimate, you must start over!" Well, by then, one has to start all over.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 27.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P178 L12]***

So this is the reason why everyone must recite the *Lotus Sutra*. The figures mentioned in it are all our great virtuous teachers. Look at Venerable Mahakasyapa, many attendees felt regret in this Dharma assembly about: in the past, it was said that Buddha turned the peerless Dharma Wheel by teaching all great Bodhisattvas. We always thought we were left out and felt remorse when we thought, why didn't Buddha teach us? Now, we realize it is not Buddha who is at fault instead the problem is with us. I believe everyone has this experience and this understanding? If you have read the *Lotus Sutra*, then it is easy to understand. If not, try to read it carefully. This is still a minor point – it is considered as an insignificant one! Other than this, there is more to it later. Eventually, [the attendees in that assembly] would all achieve Buddhahood, but what does it take? Besides, one has to offer to how many billions [of Buddhas]. In Sariputra's case, he had to make offerings to Buddhas numbering more than two million sand particles of Ganges Rivers, and by then he is able to achieve Buddhahood. Once you have attained the arhatship, you still have to take such a big circle, why? That

is because the issue is right from the very beginning – let's refresh our memories of what was discussed before.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 28.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P179 L6]***

Remember the story of the violin lesson? There was a person who had never learned it before, and the teacher accepted him right away and charged him five dollars [per hour] for tuition. Another person who had learned it before, the teacher wouldn't accept him. In the end, [the teacher agreed but] his tuition was \$105 [per hour]. What was the extra \$100 for? It was to change his erroneous habit! This is our root problem – think about it, isn't it true? One time, I mentioned another example to you: for instance, we are working for a giant business empire, wow, such a giant business kingdom. Imagine that, when you start, you just take a position, well, in a certain department. You devote your entire life until you become old and die. You become so proficient at your work that you do not consider making any changes. You should recognize this is a detour. You should know that, since your actual goal is to become the president, the best strategy would be for you to first understand the function of each department. Even if you do not understand it, the right thing to do would be to follow the guidance of the current president. You stay in one department to become familiar with it, and once you have learned enough, switch to the next one right away, learn and switch to another right away, learn and switch again. By then, you will easily and rapidly reach the position of the president.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 29B, 29.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P179 L15]***

Well then, in this situation, there are only two paths: one is where you first need to have complete faith in Buddha instead of yourself, the saying of, “Well! I want it this way.” This concept has to be removed. Whatever Buddha tells you to do, listen to him. Buddha will lead you on the swiftest path. This is one attitude.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 00.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P183 L1]***

As for the second path, once you have understood the entire contents, then from this section on you familiarize with it and switch immediately to another one; become familiar with that one then switch immediately. These two paths are feasible. Is this clear? Therefore, now at this beginning of ours, the key is for everyone to have this understanding. Once we understand and begin to practice, we will not be stuck in our petty experiences and dwell on them. It is a grave misfortune to be stuck and a very serious latent propensity!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 00.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P183 L5]***

With regards to latent propensity, later in the karma section, I will go over it in detail. Once everyone recognizes this latent propensity and look back to analyze it, then one will know right away what kind of situation we are in. By then, we can begin to more or less have some sign of practice. As of now, nobody can even recognize what is one’s own latent propensity. When engaging in something, we think that we are so right and are stuck in that latent propensity. This is not right! This is simply put, of course, not too many of us truly recognize it. Thus, what should we do? We should earnestly and sincerely study it. As for this study, that needs

to be explained in great detail, so the author says the following:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 01.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P184 L2]***

**Therefore, you should also create another concise presentation of what to sustain in meditation.**

So even though we are discussing meditation briefly, even a brief explanation of how to apply it can fill an entire book. It isn't something that can be explained in two or three sentences. To sum it up in one statement: the more and more clearly you know [this concept] in the beginning, later when you practice it will be more advantageous, quicker, and less work and effort, and the end result is better!

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 01.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P184 L6]***

**Whether you understand that all of the scriptures are personal instructions follows only from whether you know this meditative process.**

It says whether we are able to understand this perspective now – understand what perspective? That is, all of the great sutras and commentaries are our best guidance. Regarding this concept, we must earnestly learn all the preceding teachings. We should not only study, but we should also achieve certain recognition. With this certain recognition, we will carry it out accordingly. Without this certain recognition, we won't [abide by it]. Then what is having proper recognition like? With proper recognition, we will comprehend everything accordingly, and then proceed

according to the stages, forge ahead with full speed. Whereas if we lack this proper recognition, whatever we face, well, whatever we encounter, we will be attached to it and feel quite pleased with self-contentment.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 02.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P184 L13]***

Up to this point, please turn back to [page 99], the teaching on the actual session – there is a segment in it. That is the section of how to sustain the meditation in general: other than the first paragraph - besides the actual session - there is the first line of the second paragraph from the bottom of the page in that section. It says: “you might try to sustain your meditation by jumping to this and that object of meditation. You may consider setting up according to your wish a variety of virtuous objects of meditation in no specific order. Though you may do this, you will not be able to take up your object of meditation with this method.” This was discussed before; some of you asked about it again. Isn’t this concept very clear? Not only that, “Consequently, you will greatly hinder your mind’s ability to be directed as you wish toward a virtuous object of meditation.” This is the second point. In the case where you don’t have a proper understanding of the complete stages and do not develop an uncontrived conviction toward this proper recognition, in this circumstance, you will not abide by the proper path you should take. Then what would happen? Upon anything you encounter, you then apply it right away. At this time, your practice may not necessarily arise according to your aspiration. Just like our present state, well, I need to hurry up and recite Buddha’s names with a one-pointed attention! After chanting for a while, such a simple task, yet the mind just gets distracted! Needless to say if one aspires to achieve meditative serenity, it will be even harder than

climbing to the sky! Not only that, “Consequently, you will greatly hinder your mind’s ability to be directed as you wish toward a virtuous object of meditation.” In the end, it becomes a great hindrance. This is a great pity.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 04.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P185 L10]***

As for this great hindrance, the text tells us below: “If you have made this a habit from the start, the virtuous practice of your whole life will be flawed.” We are in the midst of this negative latent propensity, spending our lives in it yet totally unaware of it – rather, one feels so justified: “Well, I am practicing earnestly! I recite how many times of Buddha’s names in a day, prostrate so many times, I can even meditate without much sleep, and I only take one meal a day. Oh! All of this, well! I am such...” We are so attached to these formalities, “the virtuous practice of your whole life will be flawed!” This we have to distinguish clearly. Now let us return to [page 116], continuing...

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 05.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P186 L1]***

**Even those who have trained for a long time in the classic texts of the sutra and mantra vehicles may, when meditating on the path, interpret texts in which they have trained to support misconceptions such as the ones mentioned above. What need is there to mention those who have not trained in the scriptural collections?**

Well for some people mentioned in the text above, actually for the majority – but those who have not studied the complete teachings and scriptures will not be included in

this discussion. Nowadays, too many of us want to meditate but have no intention to study well. Ah, how pitiful! Even some who have studied earnestly – regardless of whether it is the Sutrayana or Tantrayana – the text says, “even those who have trained for a long time in the classic texts of the sutra and mantra vehicles,” this says classical texts, meaning that [those practitioners] exploring the sutras and commentaries on their own will not obtain the instructions.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 06.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P186 L7]***

The difference between personal instructions and classical texts should be distinguished clearly. “Classical texts” are mainly when you read and study sutras, commentaries, annotations, and explanations; these are considered the classical texts. As for “personal instructions,” you are still reading the sutras, commentaries, and annotations, and through the instruction from your virtuous teacher: “Well, the crucial point is here!” The difference [between the two] is as far apart as heaven and earth! Once you have the personal instructions, and you listen well to it, then it is not possible to err – as long as you are willing to practice, you will succeed. If you are exploring the classical texts on your own, it will very likely be wrong – and the probability for error is about 80-90 percent, this is what this section is referring to. Even though one has trained for a long time in the classical texts, but when applying it in meditation, well, what happens? They would say, “Oh well, now we are going to meditate!” Leaving behind what little was just learned, and going on to meditate on something else. What would the effect of this be? “Interpret texts in which they have trained to support misconceptions such as the ones mentioned above.” The two things [study and meditation] are split apart, unrelated! Since they are not



related, then may I ask, why do you bother to learn all the preceding teachings? That's it.

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 07.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P187 L1]***

Hence, the text repeatedly presents the example: just like reading a map guiding you to a location, after reading it, by the time you are going, the map is not needed. Not only that, but you also go in the opposite direction, what is that map for? So there is a type of person who does not study scriptures, and he may say, "I have not studied yet," so at least this person has not studied. However, now that you have studied for a while, and you do not need the map, may I ask, why do you want to study it? That's just a big waste! What a big waste! Moreover, what do the majority of these people end up as? They become the plight of three lifetimes. In the present world, many are equipped with the worldly intellect, and usually, these arise from the above [tendency]. Because one has the ability to discern, thus the mind is very agile; however, the teachings do not stay in the mind stream. Since the teachings did not remain in the mind, then in the following life the teaching will not align with him. However, the strength to distinguish and the intelligence remain, thus it turns into worldly intellect. This is absolutely true, once you understand the characteristics of karma, then you will be able to see it very clearly. Continuing:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 08.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P187 L9]***

**Therefore, there is a need to establish this in a more detailed manner. Nevertheless, fearing verbosity, I have not written more than just this.**

Regarding this point, in fact, it should be explained in great detail. Nevertheless, it will be too long, and so it will not be covered here. Well then, here I might as well tell a story for everyone to recall, this story was mentioned before. Three of Venerable Atisha's students – everyone thinks about it, two of them were attendants to the teacher, one focused on his own study. In the end, the achievement of the one who studied was not as much as that of the first two. Notice that he did not take any wrong turns! How is that so? You can figure out the answer on your own. The last two statements:

***[Lamrim text book Vol 1, P115; 30A, 09.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 4, P188 L1]***

**This concludes the explanation of the refutation of misconceptions concerning the method of sustaining meditation.**

“Refutation of misconceptions,” the principles of refuting the misconceptions have been explained.