



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

English Commentary Book 1, ver 1.0

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

Purpose:

This book, which contains the translation of Master Jih-Chang's commentary of the Lamrim, is for use by BW Monastery students only. It serves to facilitate students' understanding of the Lamrim as explained by Master Jih-Chang.

Student Feedback:

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

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INTRODUCTION

[1A, 00.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 3 L1]

[Namo Fundamental Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha]

Na Mo Ben Shi Shi Jya Mo Ni Fwo

Na Mo Ben Shi Shi Jya Mo Ni Fwo

Na Mo Ben Shi Shi Jya Mo Ni Fwo

[Sutra Reading Anthem]

This is the most supreme, profound and wonderful Teaching
One can hardly catch a glance of it in a trillion kalpas
Now, I have learned and I will adhere to them.

I pledge to understand the truth discoursed by the Tathagata

Today we begin the study of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* which was composed by Lama Tsong-kha-pa. Before beginning a commentary, we usually address an important concept, often referred to as “embedded meaning” (玄義). This is done to succinctly and concisely outline the essential points and attributes of the entire content to be studied. However, this is for the beginner (初機), which is the majority of us sitting here now, newly entering the domain of Buddhism. Thus, in this circumstance, not all of us will be able to grasp and understand the intended in-depth meaning. Consequently, we can devote a lot of time to study but gain few benefits. Furthermore, due to lack of understanding, [the student’s] interest diminishes and enthusiasm subsides which leads to a loss [in spiritual advancement].

[1A, 02.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 4 L3]

Therefore, I am applying a different approach in teaching.
I will start with a brief introduction to clarify some reasoning

so that we can apply it to our mental stream right away and be inspired with an interest to discover the laudability of this commentary and cultivate inspiration-for-virtue (善法欲). In other words, [we must] cultivate a strong sense of desire. Although this is a term often used in the secular world [in different contexts], the desire [we seek to cultivate is that which] directs us to the pursuit of inspiration-for-virtue. It is the essential foundation for motivating joyous perseverance and with it; our attainment of true Dharma benefit becomes available. In other words, these are the steps with which to apply the teachings. If we follow this teaching step-by-step and embrace the correct concepts, then we can highlight the essential points of the [Lamrim] teaching and summarize it systematically. This summary will be the guiding principle of our behavior. In fact, this final summary should be disclosed at the beginning for its “embedded meaning”. This is what I would like to specify first.

[1A, 04.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 4 L11]

Now let's use a simple method. What is *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* about? In brief, “Enlightenment” translated into Chinese is “awakening” - what we know as awareness. Awaken what? It is what we often know as “self-enlightenment, enlightening others, and ultimate enlightenment” - we need not go into each one in detail. Consider the most practical and concrete example. At the present moment, what are we after? Happiness! I mentioned this briefly yesterday and, to further explain or elaborate, [we all want] to avoid suffering and attain happiness. Once you thoroughly eliminate suffering, the happiness you attain is complete and faultless. This happiness is not only faultless, but it is also perfected.

[1A, 05.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 5 L4]

Why is that we cannot attain [this happiness]? We work so hard so why can't we attain it? The reason is that, although we work earnestly, without true understanding and without proper recognition, the positive effect will not necessarily arise, even though we may have worked hard for a long time. For example, if we are sick, we need to see the doctor. When you go to the doctor and you have no idea of his capability or if the medicine prescribed is applicable, you may randomly get a quack or take the wrong medicine and the sickness will not be cured. Not only will it not be cured, but it will get even worse. Similarly, the same idea applies to our daily interactions - although we are inspired by the goal, we lack the knowledge to achieve it.

[1A, 06.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 5 L10]

Now, there is an enlightened being who gave us these teachings which are referred to as "enlightenment". Enlighten what? [The enlightened being] thoroughly knows right from wrong. This is "Bodhi," which means enlightenment. In order to achieve this effect, we cannot just listen to [the teaching; we] have to apply it accordingly. Thus, you follow its steps by stages; this is called the "Path". It is as simple as that.

[1A, 07.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 6 L1]

So what are the "Stages" about? To take any path, there must be a step-by-step sequence; it must be taken in stages. For example, when we walk up the staircase, it has to be step-by-step from the bottom. No exceptions. Don't overlook this and do not belittle the sequence. In fact, the stages are very important. Often, when we engage in a task, there are several things we should pay attention to. Usually, we say quality and quantity. Quality refers to the accuracy of the content while quantity refers to the sufficiency of the volume.

For instance, take this glass of water in front of me. I am going to drink it but I must be assured that it is water. Of course, not only does it have to be water, but [I must determine] if it is dirty or clean. This is its quality—whether it is pure or not. Is it enough to have only quality? It is not enough. One drop is also water, but just one drop cannot relieve your thirst. What else do we need? Quantity! So quality must be accurate and quantity must be sufficient. In addition to these, we still need one thing: stages. This practice is something small that we often do not pay enough attention to and overlook. In fact, stages [the step-by-step sequences] are extremely vital.

[1A, 08.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 6 L9]

Let us use a very simple example. When cooking rice, we all know that we need rice, water, and heat. [Rice] needs to be washed. We cannot say that heat and water are required and then just mix them together. There must be sequential stages. You must wash the rice first, then add water and heat it up. You cannot say that it needs water and heat either way; I can heat it up then wash it afterwards. That method is useless; it is of no use. Once it is burnt, how can you [eat it]; even if it is not burnt, and it's cooked but dirty, what [will you do] then? Or, if cooking vegetables which, unlike the rice [which is easier] to clean, you cannot say that you will cook the vegetable before washing them. There is mud all over them and even pesticides, which you would eat. By nature, vegetables provide you with nutrition; unwashed, on the other hand, they will poison you. Thus, with regard to “stages”, for now, we say that in order to achieve such a goal, we should take the proper path. On this path, there are certainly proper sequential “stages.”

[1A, 09.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 7 L2]

Next, is “Great.” “Great” means to explain the stages [of the path to enlightenment] in great detail. Let me clarify this through the most commonly used terms. Usually, upon finishing the reading of a book, you may have two reactions - please pay attention! The first one, if you are used to an academic approach, is to think that [this teaching is] not scholarly enough. The second is that you may become accustomed to this approach, come to like it and forsake other approaches. Let’s go over these two points for the sake of clarification and improvement.

[1A, 10.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 7 L8]

A person with the first reaction may be accustomed to bookish terms; [even though] in the beginning we may feel unaccustomed, which is inevitable. We have to understand: what is the purpose for coming to listen to this teaching? If you are here for a scholarly purpose, you probably don’t need to come here. You can go to a college of humanities or another school to study Buddhist history or Chinese literature and study Tibetan literature so to compose great articles. You don’t need to be here at all. Here, our main objective is to apply the teaching. By practicing accordingly, the realization of ultimate enlightenment can be attained. So do not forget the emphasis here.

[1A, 10.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 7 L14]

In this circumstance, for the sake of conforming to our conditions, gradually, step-by-step, surely the latent propensity will not impact [us] like before. What about the second reaction? Maybe we listen with great joy and feel, “Wow, I can apply these theories right away!” We are really pleased! Thereby, we may unconsciously develop a mentality that rejects other step-by-step teachings,

saying:”Alas, you see that half-day talk is of no use.” Such an attitude is not encouraged. Please understand that languages and scripts are absolutely required and necessary. With whatever we are engaged in, including Buddhist study, we rely on this [language] to gradually understand [what we are learning] by degrees so that we are able to advance. Nevertheless, in our current state, we are limited by our conditions and profound learning is not available - this we have to recognize and understand. By clarifying these two reactions in advance, hopefully they can be avoided. Later on, I will apply a more scholastic approach by using diverse idioms and expressions. This is what I would like to declare in advance.

[1A, 12.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 8 L10]

Lastly, for the “Treatise” - we usually refer to it as detailed discussion, to discuss the teachings in great detail. So, from the title, we can say that the learning of this treatise is now the path for us to advance, step-by-step, from an ordinary being until Buddhahood is attained. Throughout the course of the path, [Lamrim] provides a complete and detailed explanation regarding the accuracy of the quality, the proper quantity, and the sequential stages. From it, we acquire proper recognition [of the teaching] and apply it step-by-step. This commentary is trying to provide us with the achievement of the ultimate complete state, the ultimate encompassing mind state. This commentary is what we will study.

[1A, 13.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 9 L2]

The author of Lamrim is Lama Tsong-kha-pa. Lama Tsong-kha-pa composed [this commentary]. Please refer to the colored picture on the front [of the book]. The photo in color [is of Lama Tsong-kha-pa]. This photo is extremely

solemn and very dignified. Let me briefly introduce Lama Tsong-kha-pa. He was from Qing-hai [one of the Tibetan regions], near Qing-hai Xin-ning. Xin-ning is the provincial capital of Qing-hai. He was born during the [time of the] Yuan dynasty and Emperor Yuan Shun-di. Shun-di was the last emperor of the Yuan dynasty, during the 25th year of Zhi-zheng which is equivalent to the year 1357, AD 1357. From the time that [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] was young, he was extraordinarily clever. He became a monk when he was still a child. When he was sixteen, he went to Tibet [Lhasa]. At that time, the Qing-hai area in the corner of China, including Qing-hai, Xi-kang, the [rear] part of Si-chuan and Tibet, were considered the Tibetan region. The Tibetans all had faith in Vajrayana Buddhism, also known as the Tantra teaching. In this Tibetan Buddhist lineage, the education center was located in Lhasa. Therefore, at age sixteen, Lama Tsong-kha-pa, under the influence of his teacher, went to Lhasa to pursue his studies. He then stayed in Lhasa for the rest of his life and completely revived Buddhism in Tibet.

[1A, 15.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 9 L12]

Here, I might as well introduce the Tibetan Buddhist lineage briefly. It was rarely mentioned in China, so I will go over it briefly. Tibetan Buddhism was established by King Songtsan Gampo during the time equivalent to the era of our early Tang dynasty. Before Tang, there were the Southern and Northern dynasties, followed by Sui and Tang. Songtsan Gampo lived during the Sui and Tang period and he was a very intelligent and capable emperor of Tibet. During that period, China was in the early Tang dynasty, which was the golden age of Emperor Tang Tai-zong. In Chinese history, there is a legend: Tang Tai-zong's princess, Princess Wen-cheng, was married to Songtsan Gampo. At that time, she brought many Buddhist sutras with her to Tibet.

Songtsan Gampo also married another wife who was from Nepal. Similarly, Nepal was also a Buddhist country so [she] too brought significant Buddhist teachings to Tibet.

[1A, 17.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 10 L7]

Songtsan Gampo not only invigorated Buddhism but the Tibetan written language was also established during his time. He specifically sent an official to other places [India] to learn and bring back [the language]. Finally, this official learned the Indian [Sanskrit] language. He made use of the Indian [Sanskrit] characters and, bringing his own understanding and adaptation of it to Tibet, he created the Tibetan characters. So although Tibetan is different from Sanskrit, [the alphabet used for] it is based on Sanskrit. Because of this relationship, there are many advantages in the translation. For example, with modern languages, it is different when translating English into Chinese than it is translating English into German or into French. The translation among Western languages is easier. It is because they have more similarities. This is a side comment.

[1A, 18.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 10 L14]

In addition to the written language and the establishment of national policy, most importantly, Buddhism also laid its foundation in Tibet at that time. Three generations after that, the third Emperor Trisong Detsan, who was also a fabulous emperor of Tibet, invigorated Buddhism and invited a highly accomplished master, Santarakṣita, to spread Buddhism in Tibet. Hence, Tibet officially had the “Three Jewels”, including the establishment of the Sangha. However, at that time in Tibet, there was an indigenous religion called the Bon, also known as the Dark Bon religion. It was strongly influenced by local ghosts and divinities! Therefore, there was a strong counterforce from both the Tibetan people and the ghosts and divinities of the Dark Bon. In fact, we can see

its similarity to the Eighteen Lords [in Taiwan] and so on. Those divinities and ghosts have their force. The Dark Bon could cast spells and perform all kinds of strange tricks. Thus, Tibet encountered various demonic obstacles while establishing Buddhism.

[1A, 20.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 11 L9]

Santarakṣita was a great master who said, “I have no power to surmount such evils. Now, in India, there is a great Buddhism adept, Padmasambhava. If you can invite him to Tibet, the problem will be subdued.” Thereby, the Tibetan King endeavored to do so. At that time, causes and conditions had matured so this great adept was already traveling from India to the east and had just arrived at Nepal. The envoy sent by the Tibetan King met him there and invited him to Tibet. Having invited Padmasambhava, who had attained perfection of both Vajrayana and Sutrayana Buddhism, [they asked him to] perform many sacred rites. In doing so, he tamed various demons and ghosts one by one and spread Buddhism widely [in Tibet].

[1A, 21.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 12 L1]

However, because [Buddhism] had just been founded and the foundation was newly established, the foundation was not stable and it declined again not long after the departure of Padmasambhava. A hundred years later, there was a serious tragedy. A few generations after Emperor Trisong Detsan, I can't remember how many generations, there was an emperor called Langdarma. He was anti-Buddhist and under the influence of the Dark Bon religion. This king destroyed Buddhism entirely. This was equivalent to what Emperor Wu-zong did during the Tang dynasty. In Chinese history, there were also the “Disasters of Three Wu and One

Zong.” Those four emperors were opposed to Buddhism and, by royal order, demolished temples and forced monks to disrobe. Langdarma did the same in Tibet – he destroyed Buddhism entirely! After that, it totally collapsed and was unable to recover. In China, Buddhism had already been well established so it recovered to some extent even after the Three Wu’s destruction. In Tibet, where it recovered, it was distorted. Another hundred years later, Buddhism [in Tibet] was extremely chaotic, extremely chaotic. Let’s try to visualize these chaotic situations.

[1A, 22.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 12 L12]

After Langdarma, the throne was passed to another Tibetan emperor because of a coup d’état, the details of which we will not go into here. The royal family was divided into different ruling forces. One ruling force in the West had an emperor who had faith in Buddhism. On one hand, he believed in Buddhism, and, on the other, he was deeply saddened when he thought of his ancestors’ splendid advocacy of Buddhism. So he resolved to seek the Dharma again for Tibet. As a result, the two generations of grandfather and grandson took a very long time to gather all of the treasures from the entire country and went to India to invite the Indian high adept Atisha. Venerable Atisha was the most prominent adept in India of his time. There will be an introduction to the life of Venerable Atisha when we talk about the lineage of Lamrim so I will not elaborate here. When Venerable Atisha arrived in Tibet, he revived Buddhism. From that point on, it was called the New School in Tibet; before that, [Buddhism] was called the Old School. Here, in China, there is also the Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, which belongs to the Nyingma tradition, known as the Old School. The rest, including Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug, are the New School. The New School [of Buddhism]

was formed after Venerable Atisha's reformation. Of course, the core tenets of Buddhism remained unchanged. There was just improved approach.

[1A, 24.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 13 L8]

Following the efforts of Venerable Atisha, [Buddhism] was revived. But, because the earlier foundation was never stabilized, it started to slowly and gradually, gradually degenerate again after Atisha's revival. Sometime later, there was Lama Tsong-kha-pa. Lama Tsong-kha-pa lived between three hundred and four hundred years after Venerable Atisha. Venerable Atisha lived during the early years of China's Song dynasty. Lama Tsong-kha-pa lived during the end of Yuan dynasty. After Lama Tsong-kha-pa's thorough revival, Buddhism in Tibet was like the sun at high noon. Now, it is more than six hundred years later. Before the revival of Lama Tsong-kha-pa, [the teaching] was really very weak. It soon reached its apex [after Lama Tsong-kha-pa] and was maintained for a long period. Now [the teaching] seems to be gradually, slowly, sliding. Although it is sliding, it is still intact with very complete content quite complete. These [the shifting of the lineage holders] were not known to us before.

[1A, 25.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 14 L2]

Fortunately, in the early years of the Republic, there were some remarkable venerable practitioners; especially Venerable Tai-xu, who was really a great Bodhisattva. He had the mind to promote all, and the slogan he used was: "promote all eight [Chinese Buddhism lineages] schools." Let's express this in a simple, contemporary way. Normally, with our individual practice, we practice Zen or Pure Land for example. This is fine for the individual and achievement is possible. Besides this, in terms of our individual practice, we

must follow our specific path, which is to focus on a given lineage. Yet, in terms of preserving Buddhism in its entirety, this is not sufficient - preservation has to be coordinated properly among all schools. Take building a house or a temple for example. If I need a place to practice and I build a small shed with just one room, that space will work for worshiping Buddha, eating and sleeping. As long as my practice can succeed, that should do! Nevertheless, if you need a large monastery to stage the Three Jewels, that will not work. You must have the main hall, living quarters, kitchen, and all sorts of auxiliary support. The same applies to Buddhism.

[1A, 27.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 14 L12]

Reincarnated Bodhisattvas like Venerable Tai-xu, with his aspiration and his disciples applied Chinese lineages such as Tai, Xiang, Xing, Xian (台、賢、性、相), as well as Zen and Pure Land [lineages], but the Vajrayana lineage had been broken for a long time in mainland China. The Vajrayana teaching once existed in the palace during the Yuan and Ming dynasties. Venerable Tai-xu sent his disciples to learn from the Japanese version of Vajrayana, and, at that time, Venerable Da-yong also went. Later, Venerable Da-yong went to Tibet and Venerable Fa-zun went with him. Venerable Fa-zun translated the Chinese Lamrim. Actually, there was a group of practitioners that went to Tibet to learn their lineage, and, among them, Venerable Fa-zun was the most extraordinary one.

[1B, 00.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 17 L1]

Here I would like to mention something in passing. Earlier [I] referred to Lama Tsong-kha-pa who upheld Buddhism in its entirety. [Because of his achievements,] we have the

opportunity to receive his teaching now. Despite the degeneration of [Buddhism], if we sincerely combine Chinese tradition with [Lamrim] teaching my feeling is that the future will be promising with boundless prospects both for individual practice and for Buddhism as a whole. With regard to Lama Tsong-kha-pa and his achievements, I will go over these briefly now.

[1B, 01.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 17 L6]

Lama Tsong-kha-pa's learning began with the fundamentals - the doctrines and tenets. He spent his first few years of study broadly acquiring the doctrines from various sects. At a little over the age of twenty, he entered Tibet [Lhasa] and within a few years he became a prominent figure there, due to his thorough understanding of the teachings. His [attainment] of knowledge did not come out of thin air. Lama Tsong-kha-pa was an extremely intelligent being who beseeched the virtuous teachers of his time [to teach him] and he learned from them all with sincerity. He extensively mastered the teachings from all teachers, including the Hinayana's *Treasury of Knowledge (Abhidharma-kosa)*, the Mahayana's Profound-view, Extensive-deeds Buddhism logic and even Vajrayana, and [he] attained his encompassing realization.

[1B, 02.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 18 L3]

To illustrate Lama Tsong-kha-pa's intelligence, I will share a very interesting story about him. Not long after entering Tibet [Lhasa], he became ill and went to the doctor. The best local doctors were engaged to treat his illness. After feeling his pulse, the doctors discussed his condition in order to prescribe treatment. Interestingly enough, the patient, Lama Tsong-kha-pa, also offered his opinions, commented on the symptoms of the pulse, and advised on the prescription. As a

result of [his insight], all of his doctors shared the same feeling and [each one] expressed with astonishment: “This young man is really incredible! I did not diagnose his illness; on the contrary, I have met the best medical professor and had a good lesson. What I was unable to understand, this patient has clarified for me!” It is hard for us to imagine this [achievement] - it is absolutely inconceivable.

[1B, 03.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 18 L11]

Let us reflect upon, why should we do so? We often use our life experiences in order to perceive a deeper level of the characteristics and content of the teaching [being introduced.] For instance, visualize going to a doctor in the hospital. The doctor probably would not describe [the symptoms or illness to you] and, even if he did explain it in great detail again and again for half the day, would you remember any of it? You wouldn't remember because the medical field is very complicated. Now, say, [for example,] they take an X-ray of your chest to diagnose your illness. By reading the result, the doctor can immediately identify the problem or do further testing to reveal the red and white blood cell counts for example. [At the time of Lama Tsong-kha-pa,] the doctor's only means of diagnosis was to take his pulse on the wrist. [If we were] to take our own pulse, we wouldn't know what it meant. We would only sense the pumping of a few beats. Yes, Lama Tsong-kha-pa was a very [accomplished] young man with the comprehension to convince prominent doctors [of his knowledge]. He was absolutely brilliant, [an exceptional] man. So, [we learn] from this tale that Lama Tsong-kha-pa was a very brilliant person. Being erudite, [his knowledge included] Hinayana, Profound-view, Extensive-deeds, and various sects.

[1B, 05.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 19 L6]

Why do I have to mention this? Let's pause for a moment now and, as a reminder, ask ourselves the question, "What is the purpose for my being here?" [The purpose is] to study Buddha's teaching. Why do [we] need to study it? [We need to] understand that the purpose [of studying Buddhism is] the eradication of suffering and the attainment of happiness. We need to know that our failure to achieve our purpose is due to the lack of proper perception: a special term called "ignorance." In other words, our perception and our attachment are the result of our ignorance [all about self] - me, me, me! This is the root cause of all misconceptions and sufferings. Only through the guidance of someone who has the proper perception to help us to see our faults [can we] generate the mentality to reject them. In addition, we also need further recognition [of the faults] with the proper understanding and the [accordant] application [to remove them]. Only then [are we] able to transform. The [above: recognizing faults, understanding their causes and how to remove them] concept is clear; to reflect upon them mindfully is what we should be seriously doing as first step.

[1B, 06.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 19 L14]

So we have to remember that we are here to learn from Buddha. I don't believe that anyone will disagree with this. However, let's take a closer look for a reality check. Have we come here to truly learn from Buddha? This is questionable. Speaking from my experience, we claim that we are here to learn from Buddha but, in reality, we are learning from the "me." You may wonder why, so let me analyze it further. You may consider [the teaching either] as theory or as the approach to learn from Buddha. If you consider it learning from Buddha, the benefit is yours. If you think of it as listening to some theories, then we are both wasting our time

here. Next, I will say that the reason we come here, I believe and I feel, is to follow the path - because “this is what I want to learn”. Don’t we all have this attitude? I think so. Basically, [we are here] wanting to learn with [personal determinate] willpower.

[1B, 07.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 20 L8]

Unfortunately, to be honest, the reason we are here [in cyclic existence] is due to a fundamental problem - not knowing who this “me” is. This is called ignorance, or a lack of wisdom. Our emotion, mental momentum, and perception all have a contaminated view. We read a book today [and think], “This is what Buddha taught. Ah! Got it, I’ve got it!” But do we actually understand it? No! Not at all! Later, we learn more [but only understand] the surface [literal] meaning of the printed text, which may not be the intended meaning from the Buddha. This is crucial to know! Let me pick one real example. We often say, “Alas, Buddhism talks about emptiness, so you should realize it and let go!” This is absolutely right, as long as you can realize [the true nature of reality]. Once it is realized, you will let go [of self] and once you let go, you will be liberated. [Your reply to this would be,] “Yes, right, right, right! That is exactly right.” Yet, in reality, did you really realize [the true nature of reality]? Did you really let go? Are you really liberated? My [view] is that, with careful scrutiny, [we may attain knowledge to a certain extent], but we are definitely not at the encompassing stage.

[1B, 08.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 21 L2]

We do understand the texts; however, our actual understanding of the meaning is at a secular level. Thus, with this limited understanding, the available application is limited accordingly. Our understanding [of the true nature of

reality], from the worldly view, [some understanding] does take place [and our understanding] is a little better than those who have never heard of this expression or those who have not been [made aware of] this expression at all. However, did we truly realize what Buddha wants us to realize? I am pretty sure the answer is a definite no! Of course, without even seeing [what to understand], how can we let go? Being unable to let go is due to our not having understood to the level of letting go yet, so our liberation will not be realized. Still, we are claiming: “Got it, got it!” Under such circumstances, we feel that we’ve got it, and as a result of not realizing our limitations, what we have learned is not actually Buddhism. Think it over, right? I will apply this example [claiming got it prematurely] often in future teachings.

[1B, 09.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 21 L10]

So, in the very beginning, I specifically emphasized that if we are not able to truly understand [the teachings] at the present time, we will not be able to fathom a more profound level. This is a very important concept, very important! Therefore, due to this constant perception that we have already embraced [the teachings], we often take it for granted and stop advancing [at that point.] We don’t know how to realize the [meaning of the teachings]. Thus, in this situation, two issues remain. One is “my view” - well, I consider this view to be “right”! But what does this “right” mean? [On what standard is it based?] [In comparison with] worldly convention, you are now aware of things you did not understand at the surface level. [We judge what is “right”] based on the conventional standard and that once we have gained a deeper understanding [our view of “right” is adjusted, yet still require improvement through even deeper understanding]. There is nothing wrong with it, and shows that you are an intellectual person. However, it is miles away

from learning from Buddha, not even close to the entrance to Buddhism - [you simply] planted a seed. This is the first issue to consider.

[1B, 10.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 22 L2]

The [second issue to consider is] your feeling. [I am] sorry to say that I feel it is still [governed by] usual habit due to lack of understanding. Conventionally speaking, what is the latent propensity of scholars? They talk with great reasoning while their actual actions are good-for-nothing, just like those of any unwise man or woman. In fact, we are all like that. Everyone calls out for democracy or something else. When we see faults in others, the voice is loud and clear. However when it comes to [ourselves], oddly the same [faults] apply! Now we are studying Buddha's teaching and the first threshold - reflect on it! What does [this threshold] tell us? Never take for granted that we've understood the teaching. In order to truly benefit from [the teachings], we should [diligently strive] to continue to further our study of Lamrim. We should not think, well, [I want] to learn everything, in the case of simply learning to chant Buddha's name or practice Zen meditation - honestly, learning these two is still not sufficient. I will go into this concept later and it will be covered [at that time.]

[1B, 11.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 22 L10]

Here, I would like to take the opportunity to share a story from the sutras. We've all heard of *The Lotus Sutra*. After Buddha's manifestation, he taught many sutras and there are two that are most encompassing; in other words, they are the most complete teachings [with respect to the path]. The *Array of Stalks Sutra* was taught in the beginning and *The Lotus Sutra* was expounded on last. *The Lotus Sutra* has great meaning. Buddha told his disciples that all of

[them] would eventually achieve Buddhahood and become Buddha. He started with the Hinayana arhats, [who] often thought that they had reached the limit with the attainment of arhatship. Buddha told them, “Not so! It is only an avenue of convenience, eventually you need to attain Buddhahood.” So Buddha gave predictions to everyone, finally saying that any given being will become Buddha, as long as they recite the Buddha’s name once or enter into a temple with palms together and take a bow. Even children who build a sand stupa - a stupa is equivalent to a temple - [are planting the seed].

[1B, 12.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 23 L3]

Of course, the achievement of Buddhahood is [a very long process.] However, I would like to remind everyone that Buddha predicted to the wisdom foremost Venerable Sariputra and others that, “Eventually, you will achieve Buddhahood; however, you still need to offer to numerous Buddhas, as many as the two million grains of sand in the Ganges River, for enormous lengths of time before achieving Buddhahood.” Behold! The Venerable Sariputra had the greatest wisdom among Buddha’s disciples. When we refer to the scriptures [we see that] he followed Buddha for innumerable eons, life after life. With these causes and conditions, he attained his arhatship in the life [during Shakyamuni Buddha’s time]. According to *The Lotus Sutra*, he would not achieve Buddhahood for a very long time. It is interesting that in the other encompassing sutra - *Array of Stalks Sutra*; [we learn that] youthful Sudhana, fully confident with faith, achieved his Buddhahood at the end of his life! In terms of duration, he achieved it in one lifetime. It is possible to succeed in one lifetime. He applied the Ten Great Vows [of Samantabhadra - Bodhisattva of the Great Deeds] which guide beings to the pure Buddha realm. In the two examples,

although both Sudhana and Sariputra achieved Buddhahood, the duration [for Sariputra] is hard to imagine, impossible [for us] to conceive! It is such an astronomical figure, beyond description.

[1B, 13.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 23 L12]

Given such great differences, I [might] consider that [the duration] does not matter and that, when the time comes, [I will be] reborn to the comfortable deity or human realms and Buddhahood will suddenly befall me. If this were the case, then, because achieving Buddhahood is really painstaking, I would rather [just] wait for it to happen. However, it will not happen by merely waiting! As a matter of fact, during the immeasurable eons [in cyclic existence], [we] spend most of our time suffering, enduring endless misery. To attain Buddhahood, even arhats have to suffer, not to mention ordinary beings. The majority of [ordinary beings] spend time in miserable existence with unbearable sufferings. The above is the first fact of life. The next fact is that after spending a long time [practicing] to achieve Buddhahood, the achievement does not [come automatically.] You must strive earnestly [to attain it] without any slacking. This is what we must understand.

[1B, 14.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 24 L4]

Certain cause leads to certain effect. Upon achieving Buddhahood, this still applies. Why? How come? Because sincerely yearning to achieve Buddhahood requires the accomplishment of two things. What are these two things? We have to thoroughly remove cognitive and afflictive obstructions. Before [their removal], there is no way [to achieve Buddhahood]! In other words, your debt is still there. Until you pay it off, the debt remains. Once [the debt is] paid off, then the timing is right. Furthermore, there is much

preparation to be done and upon completion, the time is right [to achieve Buddhahood]. That is how it works. As a result, the former [Sariputra] took a longer path [to Buddhahood], and accomplished it with great effort. The latter [youthful Sudhana] also achieved it but he accomplished [Buddhahood] all at once. Between the two, there is a very important concept for us [to understand], please remember! Why? What for? I believe that if we are willing to pursue this concept further, then without any exception, [we would all like] to take Sudhana's path. Otherwise, the length of time is unjustified! Such a long duration [to achieve Buddhahood] is not justifiable - to endure that kind of suffering is unworthy, right? Where does this concept arise? It is specified clearly in these two Sutras.

[1B, 15.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 24 L14]

So, if you are seriously planning to learn Lamrim, the reason I did not provide a tight curriculum schedule is so that [you will make the effort to] validate [your understanding of the teachings] through research of the sutras and scriptures as long as you are willing to learn. *The Lotus Sutra* clearly states “that I [Buddha], innumerable eons ago, have taught you [Sariputra] the complete teachings. It is unfortunate that you have not taken my advice. Often, you hastily continued with your latent propensity. In the end, you thought you understood, yet you actually did not.” Also in this Sutra, there is a parable called the *Chapter of the Parable of the Manifest City* (Chapter 7 化城喻品). Do you still remember it? I will explain this *Parable of the Manifest City* in plain language to express its core meaning. It is like [a group that] set out on a long journey for a treasure hunt in a faraway location. Everyone followed the lead merchant - our Buddha – who knew exactly how to get to the destination. Alas! Along the

way, [the group experienced] thirst, heat, and weariness. They made all sorts of effort without getting any closer [to the goal] and were getting ready to give up. Buddha knew that the “mental capacity” (心量) of the followers was too weak [to continue] so he manifested a city on the spot. “Here we are! Here we are!” [Buddha proclaimed.] Everyone got excited and, once they entered the city, [they were] pleased to drink water and eat food. Then, the Buddha said, “After this refreshment [we must go on.] We are not there yet; there is more distance to cover!” At that time, starting afresh was the right thing to do! I believe many of you here have read *The Lotus Sutra* before and know of this parable. If not, please find time to study it.

[1B, 17.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 25 L12]

Here, I will not put too much emphasis on the latter part [of the story] - [I will] just point out [its meaning]. It means that, if you really want to learn from Buddha, you should begin by calming down and being patient so you can understand what Buddha wants to tell you. Then, properly and completely apprehend the teaching. Afterwards, you [should] strive to achieve the realization in one lifetime. Otherwise, randomly jumping into [the teachings] is like taking a detour. Frankly speaking, before we have the correct understanding after all we are just ordinary beings, I also have the same feeling: alas! When I hear of the hardships in applying Buddha’s teachings and [discovering] that it is such a lengthy journey [to Buddhahood], all will be frightened. However, once you have the proper recognition and proper understanding, you will adopt the latter [aspiration to achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime]. Your fear will not make it any easier; rather, it will bring you all kinds of hardships! This is the real intention of the story. Thus, the key point is, if we can understand the entire essence of Buddha’s teaching, the application will

become much easier prior to putting [the teaching] to use.

[1B, 18.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 26 L5]

I will explain by using building a house as an example. When building a house, the summer is too hot to bear, the winter is too cold, and [sometimes there are] typhoons; we must build the house [considering these factors]. To build a house hastily and simply, just by nailing it together with iron sheets, might seem sufficient, as long as it is habitable, but over time, one will find that the reality is not so. This house is not sufficiently built! To achieve genuine fulfillment, this is not the way it should be. So, what does this example show? When we are in the midst of affliction and suffering, we quickly seek a comfortable hideout. Later, we discover that, to truly and thoroughly eradicate suffering and to reach a place of peace and happiness, we need to rely on Buddha. It is the same as building a house - to build it like a skyscraper, you must start all over.

[1B, 19.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 26 L12]

However, at this point, we often encounter a problem. So you plan to rebuild, and second time around, you reconstruct the old house by tearing it down and rebuilding it. It may be fine to tear it down and rebuild once. We often make this mistake, saying, "Alas! At this time, one room is not enough!" Our Nan-pu-tuo [monastery] is a typical example. When one room was not enough, we added another one and another one: one on the east, one on the west, another one on the [further] east, one on the top, one to another side. The additions were made in a disorderly manner. Eventually, you simply don't know what to do with it! However, the framework we have now fortunately has enough width on both sides [to sustain these additions]. Another example is building a skyscraper. You plan for one story, then two stories, but

when you want to add a third floor, you find that the foundation cannot support it. How should it be done properly? When rebuilding, we often mistakenly construct a three-story building by carelessly building the first floor just to complete it. Then, the second floor barely makes it. In order to add the third floor, the whole building needs to be torn down to restructure the foundation. Later on, if fourth and fifth floors are needed, you will have to tear it down again to rebuild. This happens to us very frequently.

[1B, 20.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 27 L7]

I believe we may have a similar experience while walking on a newly paved street. Two days later, a hole is dug [on the street for another project] before [the original hole] is filled, and two days after that another hole [needs to be] dug due to a flaw in the original plan which causes an inconvenience. Building the path to learn from Buddha is similar. The point is that [we must] establish a sound foundation in the beginning. If we are to build a skyscraper and we lack the ability now, it is fine to build upward gradually in steps but the underlying foundation has to be very sturdy. If you have the proper understanding and a plan from the very beginning, your first step is already sound. Later, adding one floor after another, you can continue until the skyscraper is [constructed.] Building it step by step is not that difficult. Upon completion of the first step, you can say it is done and the first floor is ready to move into. Then, continue to work on the second floor, and then make the third floor habitable. Advance gradually in this manner and, upon completion, the entire resplendence and magnificence will all come together, whether the building is large or small. The end effect of these two methods is as different as chalk and cheese.

[1B, 21.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 28 L2]

The aforementioned example seems absurd but, in fact, I believe we all have similar experiences. Now, the same [approach] applies to our study of Buddha's teachings. Therefore, Lama Tsong-kha-pa revealed to us that many great Indian practitioners at the time had the same attitude. That is why I made the effort to clarify Lama Tsong-kha-pa's reasoning with the same intention. In the beginning, I believe we should have a thorough understanding of the teaching. However, this is not to say that we have to mimic Lama Tsong-kha-pa [and that because] he was a Tantric practitioner, we should be as well. That is not the case! I mean to say that once you have a complete understanding of the entire teaching and focus on your goal then you can decide which path to conform to. For now, if Pure Land practice is your [chosen] path, then you will be able to delve into the entrance [of Pure Land practice] after understanding [the entire frame work of Lamrim].

[1B, 22.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 28 L10]

So you may ask, [with respect to] Pure Land practice, what is the difference between your Pure Land and my Pure Land? It is different. There is a big difference. Often, [there are] those of us who chant Buddha's name, once you learn this recitation approach, hastily [apply it]! Usually, it becomes a case of [thinking,] "As long as I chant [the Buddha's name], I will get to the entry level [of the Pure Land]." In the end, however, after all the recitation, the entrance is not necessarily available. This is the true reality. We have heard that thousands of people apply this approach [of Pure Land chanting], right? Yes, it is true! The Pure Land reciting method will deliver thousands of practitioners but how many out of ten thousand have entered [the Pure Land]? It is hard to find a few. This is the reality. If we practice according to

the teaching, what are the advantages? With complete understanding, not only will all practitioners enter [Pure Land], but they will also enter with enhanced aspirations. Initially [the goal] was just to be there. Now it is more. I want to achieve Buddhahood, not only for personal liberation, but also to liberate all sentient beings. However, for the sake of achieving this goal, I will start from what is the most conforming path for now. In this situation, I will go for it!

[1B, 23.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 29 L3]

So in the beginning, you should set [your aspiration] for the highest level. Some even set out for Ultimate Enlightenment and specify it as the aspiration of their study. The goal is rebirth to the highest level in the land-of-Eternally-Quiescent-Light. This highest level is divided into four Buddha-dhatus and nine grades (四土九品). For now of course, we lack the qualifications [to be reborn in these Buddha-dhatus]. There is no certainty that we can reach this high status in Quiescent-Light, for the highest level of the Land-of-Common-Residence is even harder to get. It doesn't matter whether you can attain the middle level or the lowest level of the highest class, at least your attainment is very stable. Furthermore, because of your aspiration, once you are there, you will see Buddha and your aspiration will be fulfilled very quickly. This is a shortcut that we should know.

[four Buddha-dhatus 四土:

常寂光淨土 Land-of-Eternally-Quiescent-Light 、

實報莊嚴土 Land-of-Real-Reward 、

凡聖同居土 Land-of-Common-Residence-
of-Beings-and-Saints 、

方便有餘土 Land-of-Expediency]*

[1B, 24.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 29 L9]

So I stated at the beginning of this commentary that I am not suggesting that you adopt any specific sects or schools of thought - absolutely not! The choice of sects or schools of thought relies on your personal level of understanding. From the very beginning, [you should strive] to achieve complete understanding of the entire content of the teaching. Once you have proper comprehension, then [you can] approach your goals with proper planning. With this recognition, you can make a decision for a conformed path and advance from there. It will happen steadily and surely. Moreover, it will be the easiest, quickest, and most comprehensive [path]. The same applies to both approaches of chanting Buddha's name or Zen meditation.

[1B, 24.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 29 L14]

Hence, later on, the teaching will reveal [to us that] we have to delve into [the teachings] from the entrance for in-depth study. This is the fundamental approach. Other conditions [we] may experience are the following: if we truly delve in, provided that the entrance is the right one, unfortunately most likely what happen to us? [We are] spinning around outside the entrance [not able to find the proper starting point to practice]. There is a Chinese expression to describe this, "to build a cart behind closed doors" [which means to be overly subjective and ignore all external options]. Under different conditions, we won't even find the entrance because we do not know where the entrance is. What else? We are passing time [in the status quo]. We feel like we are studying and practicing Buddhism, as aforementioned, and we feel that we are learning

Buddhism, but, as a matter of fact, we are learning from this “me,” and gradually, this “me” grows bigger and bigger.

[1B, 25.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 30 L4]

Here, let’s evaluate carefully. Often the most popular, or what can be considered the most contemporary trend, is the Pure Land practice. Venerable Yin-guang is the master of this school of practice. He specifically mentioned that many people try it for a while, whether chanting Buddha’s name or something else, and the more they chant, the more they accumulate affliction. Pardon me, but something is wrong [with this application of the practice]. You will ask, why? The same reasoning mentioned the day before - [you] consider it [the practice you know of as] the proper approach. As a matter of fact, you shouldn’t be so sure. As I said the other day, don’t ever jump to the conclusion that you’ve understood it too soon! We devote time to groom the “me” instead of engaging in Dharma practice. This “me” will grow bigger and bigger and affect [immeasurable] suffering, too much [suffering]! However, this will be covered later in more detail. This is why I introduced the condition of how Lama Tsong-kha-pa applied the teachings at his time. That is why he attained high achievement and the capability to help so many [beings]. He even restored Buddha’s teachings in their entirety. To this day, we are still benefiting from it. He guided us with this specific path. This is also the reason why I chose Lamrim Chenmo for us to study together.

[1B, 26.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P30 L13]

For the same reason, I have completely modified the approach of teaching and changed it entirely. Later on, this will be the approach to follow. For every section of discussion, the intention is for us to cultivate understanding. Based on this understanding, [we will] gradually extend it and broaden it without losing the focus of the contents. Once

we have this understanding, [we will] increase it gradually then piece together the entire picture. This approach will enable us to form a proper knowledge about Buddha Dharma in its entirety.

[1B, 27.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 31 L2]

This is only a brief introduction of how it was at Lama Tsong-kha-pa's time. He said his learning was established upon understanding the tenets of the teaching accordingly. Consequently, during his time, he attained the highest, peerless achievement in all of Tibet. As for the tenet teaching, I will apply a simple example: he once taught twenty one commentaries in one day. In other words, our regular experience is [to complete] one session, [and then proceed to] another session - he taught twenty one sessions [in one day].

[2A, 00.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P35 L1]

Well, now let us continue with the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. We talked about Lama Tsong-kha-pa yesterday and learned that he could lecture twenty-one sessions in one day. The highest number he taught was twenty-nine teachings in one ceremony. Once, at an assembly event, he stated, "Our present time is degenerating! If we leave it alone...our overall [environmental] conditions are waning!" He thought of the grand conditions [that existed] during Buddha's time and stated that, during that era in Tibet, there was a very splendid Dharma assembly. Within this assembly, there was a great teacher who taught eleven sessions. To teach eleven sessions meant expounding upon the teachings every day [for several days] for eleven sessions. Each session consisted of one commentary, and each commentary had its

main topic. All were expressed in an erudite manner by quoting from encompassing scriptures and commentaries. This was definitely not an ordinary task, definitely not simple at all! Normally, lecturing one treatise is not easy, and this great teacher did eleven of them.

[2A , 01.20 ; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 35 L8]

Thus, many disciples worshiped, praised, and implored [teachings from] the Master - Lama Tsong-kha-pa. He responded, "If I put in a little more effort, perhaps I will be able to do the same [as this great teacher]." In that case, many disciples and virtuous scholars came to supplicate, for Dharma requires supplication with great veneration. Lama Tsong-kha-pa agreed, "Very well, I shall give it a try." Thus, he immediately entered into a retreat and single-pointedly focused on the preparation. Later, news of this was widely spread and because he was already a prominent local Master many people heard the news. With anticipation they pledged [to attend] this Dharma assembly, which was very rare and hard to come by at that degenerate time. People wished to postpone it for a few days so that more of them could arrive in time to listen to the teachings.

[2A, 02.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 36 L5]

Therefore, Lama Tsong-kha-pa began with a brief start and, after several days' gradual progress, ended by teaching fifteen commentaries in one day. In actuality, he completed seventeen commentaries. Wow! Everyone gave exclamations of praise. Later, the highest record that [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] achieved was the completion of twenty-one major commentaries. Ah! Just by hearing these numbers we feel nothing but praise and admiration! If there is an opportunity in the future for us to attend Great Teachers' meditation centers, it will be a time [for us to] apprehend how

auspicious and inconceivable they are. Not only did [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] teach [in this way], he also tended to his personal practice without any slacking or laxity! That was the way [that he practiced]. Therefore, [I] specifically presented the personal accomplishments of this great teacher – Lama Tsong-kha-pa.

[2A, 03.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P36 L11]

In regards to this, I encourage you to read the life story of Lama Tsong-kha-pa'. [The Chinese version] can be found in the local bookstore. By the same token, the *Biography of Atisha* that we already have is not merely his biography, it also provides great inspiration within us, inspires us greatly. [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] is the author of this Treatise and I will not discuss his high level of accomplishments any further. So far, [we have introduced] the author [Lama Tsong-kha-pa]. Next we will learn about the translator, Venerable Fa-zun. He was a remarkable Master since the [time of the] establishment of the Republic of China. He passed away a few years ago, perhaps four or five years! These [are some facts] that I would like to briefly mention here!

PROLOGUE

English LR V.1 p.33

[2A, 04.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 37 L2]

Let's look at the text now and open to [page 33]. This

Treatise is divided mainly into three parts:

- The first is the preface,
- Followed by the main body,
- And the last part is the concluding section.

This is equivalent to what we [commonly] know as: the forward, the main content, and the dissemination section.

Therefore, from the very beginning, we will start with the preface, which is divided into three parts:

- The first is the “Opening Veneration” – taking refuge and obeisance;
- The second explains the “Purpose of composing this Treatise”, - why [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] created the Treatise;
- And the last part is, “Implore earnestly,”- to implore us [to learn] how to listen to and uphold [the teachings]!

Now [let us] go over the text.

This is Tibetan; [translated from Sanskrit.] From the second line on, the original verses are translated from Tibetan.

[2A, 05.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 37 L7]

Homage to the guru Manjughosa

[2A, 05.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 37 L9]

“Homage” means we go for refuge! We pay respect whole-heartedly. In fact, this homeage covers all three karmic doors [physical, verbal and mental]. In reality, the mental motivation grooms the physical and verbal actions. That is how it works. With respect to “guru”, in India “guru” is a special title which is translated into what we know as

“Master”. Therefore, the Master, which seems like a special term in Tantric teaching, is actually not. Generally, in India, the respectful term for a teacher is “guru” [and this is] the object for “homage” here. “Manjughosa,” is Manjusri Bodhisattva. In general, Mahayana commentaries pay homage to Manjusri [the Great Wisdom] Bodhisattva [at beginning of the text], because treatises [they] represent wisdom.

[2A, 06.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 38 L3]

The opening-veneration is also a kind of tradition, one of the conventions - a lineage. It has several meanings; the simplest of which is to beseech blessings and to remove obstacles, and in so doing make the composing of the treatise complete. For followers, it allows us to know our purpose, which is our core intention, our main objective, our reliance, and our direction. At the same time, it purifies our obstacles and helps us to achieve ultimate perfection. This is the meaning of the opening-veneration.

[2A, 07.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 38 L7]

[What is] the content of the veneration? First, it explains this “treatise” - composing of this commentary. Why do we pay homage to Manjusri Bodhisattva when composing a commentary? As we know, our three precious scriptural collections are: Sutras, Vinaya, and Abhidharma. The Abhidharma is mainly [for the development of] wisdom. Commentary is known to distinguish [Buddhist] term-and-appearance profoundly, thereby making the cultivation of wisdom available. In Buddhist teachings, the representative of Great Wisdom is Manjusri Bodhisattva. That is the [reason we pay homage to him]. There is also the possibility of not paying homage to Manjusri Bodhisattva [as opening-veneration because] the opening-veneration

depends on the characteristics [of the commentary]. This is the first [veneration section]. The following verses are [about] the three Jewels, one by one. The first:

[2A, 08.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 38 L12]
I bow my head to the chief of the Sakyas,
Whose body was formed by ten million perfect virtues,
Whose speech fulfills the hopes of limitless beings,
Whose mind sees precisely all objects of knowledge.

This is our Shakyamuni Buddha. Here our reference to him is divided into three parts: physical, verbal, and mental. As a matter of fact, this classification has [a] specific meaning, [a] very special meaning! This meaning will be discussed [later] in the chapters for taking refuge. Why do we wait until then? When you take refuge with the understanding of what it means to take refuge you will be able to receive the specific benefit immediately, which is why. Thus, as for the author and composer, who, for the sake of beseeching blessings and removing obstacles to ensure the completion of the composition, so they began by taking refuge wholeheartedly. As for [we] followers: on the one hand, [this taking refuge is meant] for us to understand the intended meaning of the composer while, at the same time, it inspires us to attain the true meaning of the content. Provided [we] take refuge with understanding of its meaning, we will have benefits right away. So the actual contents of [taking refuge] will be reserved for later.

[2A, 09.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 39 L9]

Here, [I will] briefly explain the difference between the physical form of our Shakyamuni Buddha and our [own physical form]. This difference is the reason [that] we go to him for refuge, otherwise, we would say, “I, I am just as fine

[as he], why should I go for refuge to him?” Alas! My physical form is a contaminated vessel - the origin of suffering; but Buddha’s is not. Why [am I contaminated] and he is not? From beginningless time, I have engaged in various contaminated deeds, while Buddha did just the opposite. For numerous eons he engaged in all sorts of virtuous deeds to the level of ultimate perfection. With this reliance on virtuous deeds which is applicable among all conventional and ultimate, contaminated and purified levels, Buddha is purified - thus it is “perfect virtue”. Due to this virtuous karma, the effect is a perfect physical form. This is where we should truly pay our homage. Our homage will receive the benefits from being in accordance, and eventually we will be able to achieve what Buddha did, which is our ultimate goal.

[2A, 11.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 40 L2]

From the beginning, from the very first step we bring the following to your attention, “Why do I need to learn this treatise?” It is not meant for us to scratch the surface so that we can have some topics [of conversation] for social occasions or seemingly to have something to talk about. It is not [meant to be] like this! [The purpose] is for us to recognize, understand, and align with [the teachings.] This will enable us to emerge from all forms of suffering and attain the ultimate perfect Buddha-form. Therefore, this is the simplified meaning. Hence, when we speak, it is either in jest or in dispute - that is how we are. [For us,] at times of happiness it is jest, while the opposite is dispute. It is truly meaningless! Whereas Buddha, well, he is able to achieve perfection and successfully accomplished - to fulfill all living beings’ [aspirations]. The [term] “limitless” means all living beings are included - included for what - “hopes and aspirations”! Their aspiration is priceless and precious. This

aspiration arises from Buddha's speech.

[2A, 12.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 40 L10]

What aspiration do we living beings have? [The answer] is very easy, [we want] to attain ultimate happiness. Ordinary conventional happiness is contaminated, tainted! A speck of [contaminated] happiness will lead to great suffering. [Ultimate happiness] is truly our only source of aspiration and we should never forsake [it] to trade for trivial provisional gain. This is the way it should be. Often, when we speak, it is either in jest or in dispute; whereas Buddha can fulfill not just one person, not only himself, but all sentient beings' [aspirations]. Ah! How incredible! Imagine that he is able to fulfill all sentient beings [aspirations]; he himself must be totally fulfilled! Thus, his physical form is endowed with these auspicious merits and his speech is bestowed with such truthful content.

[2A, 13.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 41 L1]

So how did he [achieve this]? His achievement was due to his thorough and definite realization. [Thus,] next it says, "Whose mind sees precisely all objects of knowledge." His mental capacity is such that he is able to "precisely" [achieve] definite realization. It is as simple as that. Usually, we only partially see things and are unable to see the true nature of reality. We are not able to do so. Often, we detect something such as air, but we are not able to see it, it cannot be seen! Well, scientists tell us that there is air and it exists here, yet we cannot see it. Then what is air? We cannot see it and even scientists cannot possibly see it. It is the same with all things around us; the possibility [of not seeing them] is there. Not only that, we cannot see the invisible things, take any given item in front of us - this cup for instance, you claim to see it? I cannot say that you do

not see it, but I also want to tell you that I cannot affirm that you are seeing it. You can see one side of this cup, but can you see the other side? No. You can turn the cup around, looking at all four sides, but not inside. We always have limitations. In the case of limitation, there arise various flaws [and] all kinds of problems! That's the way it is.

[2A, 14.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 41 L11]

Thus, to see true reality is not an easy task, let alone to become omniscient. For instance, a Hinayana arhat can also see part of true reality but still lacks [seeing it in its] entirety. This is a simple way to put it. [Buddha will teach us] everything we should know. [He] will not leave out any of it. The quality and quantity of his knowledge enables his omniscience. Due to this omniscient capacity, he is able to achieve the ultimate solution. Thus, he is capable of self-fulfillment as well as fulfilling all sentient beings' [aspirations]. This is mental karma.

[2A, 15.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 42 L1]

These three can also be considered as his physical, verbal, and mental - three karmic doors. They can also be the representation of Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya. Generally speaking, the "mind" represents his Dharmakaya, "speech" represents his Sambhogakaya, and "body" represents the Nirmanakaya. For the mental karma is truly aligning to the encompassing teaching, that is Dharma. As for his physical form that appears, this Buddha form is unperceivable by us. Now with the "perfect virtues" we are able to perceive and the appearance is based on each individual's accordance level. Bodhisattvas are able to see [Buddha's] Sambhogakaya [blissful form]. Beings prior to attaining the first bhumi [level], and before they penetrate their ignorance, are able to see [Buddha's] Nirmanakaya

[incarnation form]. This Nirmanakaya exists in four types of birth [v1 p. 267] and six kinds of beings [v1 p. 267]. These can also be described as spiritual form, blissful form, and incarnation form. To sum up, this is our Shakyamuni Buddha, the Conqueror. He is the founder of Buddhism in this world, the guidance for beings and deities. This is the first [verse].

[2A, 17.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 42 L9]

The teaching from Buddha is encompassing. During the passing down process there were two major lineages: one represents wisdom [profound-view], the other represents skillful means [extensive-deeds]; or as we know them, great compassion and great wisdom. [This happened] at the time of Buddha's ultimate enlightenment – known as Buddhahood. Thus Buddha is called the dual perfections honorable one - endowed with profound-view and extensive-deeds. Later on, [the teaching] gradually and surely passed to two representative Bodhisattvas. Actually, these two Bodhisattvas were capable of upholding the entirety of the respective lineage. Which two? One is Bodhisattva Maitreya who represents extensive-deeds and the other is Bodhisattva Manjughosa [Manjusri] who represents profound-view. Thus, let us go over the second verse:

[2A, 18.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 42 L14]

**I bow down to Ajita [Maitreya] and to Manjughosa,
The supreme heirs of the unequalled teacher [the
Buddha].**

**Having assumed the burden of all the Conqueror's
deeds,**

They emanate in innumerable Buddha-realms.

Now, the “supreme heirs of the unequalled teacher,” Buddha - is supreme, peerless, and unsurpassable - [this heir of Buddha] is referred as the most laudable Dharma Prince of Buddha. This Dharma Prince can uphold the entire load of Buddha’s Dharma Works on his shoulders. Upon shouldering the load, what did he accomplish? At this moment, [he] manifests into countless and limitless forms, emanating into innumerable worlds to cultivate sentient beings. Who are they? They are Bodhisattva Ajita or Maitreya, the representative of skillful means - the great compassion; and also Bodhisattva Manjusri, the representative of wisdom.

[2A, 19.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 43 L6]

Great compassion, the spirit of enlightenment, is the inspirational force [needed] to salvage all sentient beings and with the application of all sorts of skillful means and methods to help others, it is thus called extensive-deeds. However, merely having this motivation to help others won’t work - [if we] lack the proper methods. So the skillful means, which is wisdom, is required. In each family, the kindness of motherly love seems to be boundless. She always wishes the best for her children. This motherly love is filled with affection, yet falls short in proper guidance and the effect is spoiling, pampering! The [Chinese] character of “spoil” is composed of three dots representing water to the left and the word weak to the right - [meaning] spoiled the children rotten. So the proper method for guidance is required. That is the way it should be. This proper guidance is wisdom. The same applies to the teaching from Buddha [that we are learning] now.

[2A, 20.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 43 L13]

The aforementioned “emanate,” does not mean

wandering with nothing better to do - this is not the case! Thus, the quote from the Sutra, “Bodhisattva is like the purity of [the] moon, emanating from the measureless space.” Bodhisattvas have limitless wisdom light. Why is [the light] described as [that of] the moon? The sun shines on the body; [but its] heat is unbearable to people! The moon is bright but provides the feeling of coolness. [Bodhisattvas] are different from sravakas that stay in their meditation. [Bodhisattvas] are endowed with skillful means and various methods. Therefore, [Bodhisattvas] tour the worlds, so [they] emanate through measureless space, aided by wisdom. Thus, even though they engage in various Dharma Works, the works are not tainted. This is the meaning of “emanate” from the perspective of cultivating living beings.

[2A, 21.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 44 L4]

Continue on, it also [mentions] another pair of Bodhisattvas. One is Nagarjuna, the other is Asanga. They also represent wisdom and methods, respectively. One is profound-view, the other is extensive-deeds; one is great wisdom, the other is great compassion.

[2A, 21.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 44 L6]

English LR V.1 p.33

**I bow to the feet of Nagarjuna and Asanga,
Thoroughly renowned throughout the three levels,
Ornaments of Jambudvipa who wrote exact
commentaries on the intent
Of the Mother of Conquerors, so difficult to fathom.**

This is to say, Buddha’s teaching is already perfectly

encompassing, [so] why did he need the assistance from these two [Bodhisattvas]? Here is a questionable point that perhaps you are not even aware of what to ask about. This is our question. We consider Buddha as the greatest Teacher, [so] why do we need Bodhisattvas? Even with [regard to] Bodhisattvas, [since] the tenth level is the most experienced, why bother with anyone that is less, such as Nagarjuna and Asanga? For both Bodhisattva Maitreya and Bodhisattva Manjusri are virtually enlightened Bodhisattvas [senior Bodhisattvas], followed by Nagarjuna and Asanga who are at a junior level. How does this hierarchy work? This is a question, and I shall briefly address here.

[2A, 23.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 44 L13]

In Buddhism, besides quality and quantified-measurement, there is one more condition - the so called “systematic order.” To us, it aligns with our condition. This is quite [an] important [point], [to know that it] aligns with our conditions, very important! That is to say, that if we are at Buddha’s level, he will appear as Buddha to help us. If we are at Mahayana level, he appears as a Mahayana practitioner. Within Mahayana, there are many variable levels. Hinayana will be helped by the appearance of a practitioner of the same level. This is the systematic order on the path of studying Buddhism. For those with sharp faculties [higher wisdom level], he guides them with the most comprehensive approach. Therefore, the very first Sutra taught by Buddha after his enlightenment was *The Array of Stalks Sutra*, which is considered as the most complete [Sutra]. At this time, although we were never present at that particular time of Buddha, even reading Buddha’s stories [we see] that: the one with the foremost wisdom, Sariputra, sat in the event listening to *the Array of Stalks Sutra* [with the attitude] like a mute deaf, not knowing

what was taught. I believe this is a well-known story. In this regard, we may have faith in Buddha, yet cannot necessarily experience the same frame of mind. Let's explore it with an example to appreciate it from experience.

[2A, 24.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 45 L8]

For example, we are sitting here today, studying this “Lamrim”, or the like. Maybe [for us] it is the most inspiring, the most exciting commentary and all of us are wowed [by it]! Whether it is the audience or the speaker, [everyone is] filled with joy! If a stranger comes in who does not respond to the teaching, [he] would sit there without any interest. Good grief, [he] would not know what [we] were talking about. This is one example. There is another one: consider that there is a banquet today with many dignitaries and all sorts of important figures attending and we have the opportunity to participate. If we bring a little boy, or a child with us [to this banquet], and upon returning from the banquet we were to ask him, “Today you attended a big event, what did you see?” He may simply reply that he saw chocolate. Is there anything else? No, nothing. Not knowing what to look for, [he] didn't know [who] any of those strangers [were]! Whereas [what] another attendee saw, wowed him! [He saw] the most popular politicians and a famous scholar who gave a great speech. Wow, [for him] it was extraordinary! I believe we all have similar experiences! How so? The next section is of great importance.

[2A, 25.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 46 L4]

It states clearly in *The Array of Stalks Sutra*, that we never seriously apply any practice at the causal stage. Why don't we apply it? [It is because we] are lacking inspiration and decline to explore further. This is the sign of not being in accordance. For the sake of clarification I shared the

aforementioned story. [This is the comparison of not knowing what to look for and persisting on individual preference.] On the contrary, for instance, if you are a senior monk, like our discussion this morning regarding the food we eat, very interesting! Some are inclined toward this, while others felt those things are all erroneous discrimination, [to them] the simpler the better. For sure, many are not used to it [eating two meals a day] in the beginning and they hope to get more. The opinions are very different. Therefore, for those who prefer simplicity, plentiful selections give them headaches. They are not sure what to pick; [and so], oh well, [they] just randomly pick something! That is to say, each individual has his or her personal preference, which is the way it is.

[2A, 27.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 46 L13]

Due to this reason, there arise various systematic orders; for example our latent propensity [of our faculty level] is one example. Hence, when getting to the more advanced teachings, it automatically evolves into various systematic orders; this is something we should understand. Just as the *Lotus Sutra* mentions, [it does not] matter under what condition [you find Buddha's teaching], once you come across the teaching, eventually, you will have the same achievement. However, you begin from the entrance that aligns with you the most. Many enter from the profound-view and many enter from the extensive-deeds.

[2B, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 49 L1]

There is a reason for step-by-step veneration – it illustrates the lineage of this commentary from generation to generation. Here, the emphasis is not just toward wisdom or skillful-means [compassion]; it also venerates both compassion and wisdom! Furthermore, it declares that this

treatise is not intended to teach the great Bodhisattvas, yet the veneration can be observed through your gradual approach. Because it is this way, we are able to recognize it, ah, right! This is the origin of the treatise, and the targeted audiences are not great Bodhisattvas. Thus, [the veneration] is listed in a step-by-step manner. Let's see what the extent of the final passing of the lineage will be.

[2B, 00.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 49 L7]

Therefore, next it talks about Nagarjuna and Asanga, and what are their characteristics? “Of the Mother of Conquerors, so difficult to fathom.” The Buddha thus passed this down to Bodhisattva Manjusri and Bodhisattva Maitreya – no matter whether it is a sutra or a treatise, it is extremely profound and vast. “Vast” means all-encompassing and “profound” means seeing the true nature of reality. It is inconceivable by us ordinary beings, and even sages of the Hinayana may not comprehend it. So “the intent of the Mother of Conquerors,” these incredible and extraordinary teachings, refers to the Mahayana teachings. Here, it specifically points to *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*. Why? For the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* clearly stated the complete, systematic orders for ordinary beings to achieve Buddhahood.

[2B, 01.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 50 L4]

Although it was said to be a complete [teaching], we ordinary beings, average people, would not be able to understand it, we will not comprehend it! [We] know each word but not the content and, usually due to our biased perception, we falsely believe that we have grasped the intended meaning, which ends up in failure, results in ruin! Therefore, the *Surangama Sutra* describes it as mistaking

the finger for the moon. Well, if a virtuous teacher points out the moon to you, but you don't see the moon and mistake his finger to be the moon. That is to say, if no one profoundly expounds [the teachings] to you, [you] are not able to understand the intended meanings. Therefore, this extraordinary teaching requires some explanation. The person who explains it should possess a certain level of alignment [toward the teaching]. Thus, now these two [Nagarjuna and Asanga Bodhisattvas] are capable of explaining this extraordinary teaching in various commentaries, revealing the profound and underlying intensive meanings to guide us sentient beings. Due to this guidance from Buddha, this secular world can then be transformed from contamination to purity; this is truly magnificent, truly exalted! This type of magnificence [the meaning of this term in Chinese] was originally describing the [formation of purified] colors. Just like if our house were filthy, and we brought in good things... [it is the same with] this secular world that is now filled with contamination - [these two Bodhisattvas] adorned it with Dharma. Because of this act, they are "thoroughly renowned throughout the three levels." These three levels are: heaven, human, and above ground or below the ground, this is what it means.

[2B, 03.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P50 L14]

Then, who are they? They are the representatives of Bodhisattva Maitreya's lineage, which are Bodhisattva Asanga of the extensive deeds and Bodhisattvas Manjusri and Nagarjuna of the profound view lineages; these represent the proper lineages. In India, this [lineage] is very important. Actually, when it comes to China, the importance is the same - the lineage of the teachers is extremely important. [Let's leave alone] Buddhism - the worldly teachings are the same way, worldly education is similar!

What a pity, very regrettably, we are now in a degenerate time, with this lack of lineage, [we learn] just by self-taught readings and claim, “ah, got it.” In fact, [we are] far from it, far from [knowing it].

[2B, 04.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P51 L4]

Therefore, when speaking of this, I have this recollection: while I was studying earlier, I came across several stories. Master Zi-bo was one of the four major Masters during the late-Ming dynasty. He was a very outstanding practitioner. Thus, everyone called him Venerable Zi-bo due to his accomplishment - he reached a very thorough realization. He endured various hardships and explored specific topics until he achieved great doubt [a Zen practice where practitioners forced themselves with huge effort to explore fundamental questions]. In his autobiography, he described the conditions of his diligence - delving to trace the question until [his] head and face were swollen. His head, face, and body were all swollen, that was the situation. Thus, he reached realization. Upon the realization, he said, “Alas! If I were with great teachers like Lin-ji and Deh-shan - awakened by being struck with a stick - all these hardships would not be necessary!” By reading the biography, it seems like just lightly a few sentences. Now, I briefly bring it [the hardship to earn realization] to your attention.

[2B, 05.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P51 L11]

Let’s look at “head and face all swollen.” What kind of condition is it? It is hard for us to imagine what is like to have a swollen head and face; [we] probably have no idea. Here, let me mention this contemporary person, this person you may have the opportunity to meet in the future. He probably is close to forty, I forgot the exact age. For a while, he studied hard all by himself, what did he do? [He was] In a

“pratyutpanna-samadhi” retreat, [he] engaged in this retreat. It was decades ago, when I had just returned from America. Upon my return, he came and visited me, and came to talk to me. He told me that he was studying at a Buddhist institution. I said, “You should continue with the program”. He told me, “Well, I really could not continue study in this place!” I knew that he was a practitioner, and nowadays most Buddhist institutions are filled with curricula on topics like English and Japanese languages, which he had no interest at all. Later, I said to him, since you already started; just continue with the remaining three-year program. He replied, “Venerable, why did you come back here?” I said I came back for a retreat. I then briefly went over with him [my experience abroad]... He stayed with me for three days, and then he returned to begin [his practice].

[2B, 06.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P52 L6]

Later, [he] applied the pratyutpanna-samadhi without telling others. I said, “This pratyutpanna-samadhi is not easy at all, you should not do it hastily.” He went ahead with determination, well, that was what he wanted, and I told him the method. Actually, I was also a layman, however I had studied the teaching and had some understanding of the proper procedure, so I told him. Upon returning [to his place] he wrote to me, describing how he got started.... Of course this type of activity certainly is not saying: well, I plan to make one big effort until the evening, this is not so. It should be done with gradual progress; abide by the few important points. First is to prepare for the external conditions, there is no other choice - you need to cut off external interactions! Then, next is some preparation, on the one hand to adjust both physical and mental conditions, then, [on the other hand,] beginning the daily walk. In the beginning, try to walk for two hours; well, it will not be easy. After walking for a

while, gradually it will become much easier, increasing the practice to three hours, then four hours, and, eventually, walking slowly for twenty hours becomes possible. It is not easy! Without trying it yourself, twenty hours of walking seems easy, try it yourself. Let alone asking you to walk for twenty hours; you can't even sustain walking for two hours in one effort.

[2B, 07.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P53 L2]

Another experience of mine was in suburban New York. There were two disciples, one of them was a westerner; I arrived at the time that they had just started to practice. I told them don't be hasty, but they were very impatient. I figured that they were eager to rush into it and that it was futile to stop [them]. Since the prayer hall upstairs was spacious, you [referring to the westerner] go ahead and give it a try. He made a daily schedule. For the first day, [I am] not sure how he survived, I had no idea. Early on the second morning, he said, "Well, Master, [I am] not able to continue!" "Why?" "The first part of the day is fine but, for the latter half, [I am] unbearably fidgety. But I committed to stay with the schedule and can't stick with it; [I] finally had to give up at night, it certainly was tough!" So this is my personal experience as well as the experience of people around me.

[2B, 07.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P53 L8]

Thus, the aforementioned person persisted in walking, walking, walking, and walking... The first three months, he did not see too much effect, not much result. But after a while, what happened to him? Swelling, his feet became swollen. If it were us, well, just a little bit of hardship becomes unbearable. When the swelling first started, because he had heard about this effect before and [he was] aware of predecessors' experience, [he knew that success]

would never be possible without a strong will! When [he pressed his feet] with his fingers, the touch and removal left a dent that did not recover, just like that. It took half a day, half a day [to recover], then the swelling happened again, with such tremendous power! The swelling first started from the feet, then the thighs, and, later, the lower part of the body, and he clenched his teeth and persisted. After three months without any sign [of effect], well, well, he took a break for a good rest, and started over again. The second time was different, he described [the course] later, [he walked for] over twenty hours. He said that he was not able to get close to either the four walls or the middle [of the prayer hall]. In the center of the prayer hall was the statue of Buddha. When he was walking by, he was very tired, so tired that he would gently lean on the wall. As soon as he leaned on it, he immediately fell asleep, fell asleep right away! Sound asleep right away! While he was asleep, he felt a “thump”, and got up right away! Sometimes [he] sat on the floor with no intention to get up. Oh no, can't do this! He tried so hard for a long while to stand straight again on the same spot. He was unable to lean against the wall, once he leaned on it, he fell asleep immediately! Thus, with such a strong will power - the will power!

[2B, 09.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P54 L5]

Under such circumstances, he slowly and gradually continued, aha, an interesting condition arose - there comes the effect! A sense of pliancy arose from within him and the [swelling] gradually faded. He felt the pliancy and was incredibly refreshed within. In fact, without the internal [will power], it is impossible for you to sustain. Therefore, there are two requirements: one is strong will power, just impossible to do away with it. The other is the proper guidance. With proper guidance, supported by this strong

will power, continue with persistence. Without the correct approach and the proper guidance, he could not achieve these true aligning conditions. Without achieving these true aligning conditions, well, all the sufferings are wasted; it is useless, of no use! Thus, for him, both attainments [physical and mental] appeared eventually and, later, the physical and mental [swelling] faded, he felt incredibly refreshed! The entire worldly affliction [was transformed], the clear and cool [feeling] is hard to describe! If you strive hard, you will experience it, that kind of joyfulness is incomparable.

[2B, 10.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P54 L13]

Then, to what degree is this [feeling of] clear and cool? I will briefly provide a general description. He strived very hard; usually he had very good appetite. When we become newly ordained, we all have the experience of having two meals a day. Soon after you engage in this daily routine, [although] you are not accustomed to it, after a while of not having the evening meal, [you] will have great appetite and eat a lot. Often, [we] fill up our alms bowl, sometimes it is still not enough and [we are] still required to eat two meals. Gradually, his appetite was reduced. Every day he ate with the small bowl like we have - half a bowl of a very watery porridge, no more than that. Any more intakes would cause it to become the most uncomfortable time of the day - the thirty minutes immediately after the meal. After meals, the feeling of clarity and coolness disappeared, that is how it goes, then [he] felt laden both physically and mentally - and this is the first [benefit of the feeling of clarity and coolness].

[2B, 10.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P55 L5]

The next benefit: [as he] gradually, gradually aligned with [the practice], during steaming hot summer days, he still wore a knitted cap like a helmet, well; he did not feel the

heat. (Today he took it off, for he just had a cold.) Then, during winter days, in the winter this place of ours can be pretty cold, he still wears the cap and the same robe without feeling cold. Therefore, when he truly attained the arisen condition - it is not like something that we can force it to happen - that is how [he achieved with proper method]. Thus, I mention his case here [as an example], for he endured many hardships during the process and he tried three times in total. Under such circumstances, it is still far from being enlightened, still a great distance! That is the fact. So we often listen from others with the impression of it being very easy, having a swollen head and face, it seems like a story, but if you give it a try, this swelling head and face will be a very difficult situation.

[2B, 11.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P55 L13]

In addition, at the moment that doubtful feelings arise, it is also interesting for the Zen meditator to trace the doubtful feeling. That is when your mind is nothing but filled with this doubt. When you are chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha and stating, "Who is chanting?" This [tracing of the doubt] is what was described as owing others millions of dollars - owing a million dollars, and being pressed by the creditor without knowing how to react. Or it is like if someone owes you million dollars, you do not know what to do and have the feeling of not letting go, wanting to get the money back. This is what [the tracing of the doubt] was described as unbreakable; it won't twist open, like that! For you, anyway, these feelings have to be properly experienced personally. It does not come easy, it is hard to attain! And, usually, it takes many years to accumulate such [dubious] experience.

[2B, 12.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P56 L4]

Later, [Master Zi-bo] said that if he was under great teachers like Lin-ji and Deh-shan, he would be awakened by one stroke! This is absolutely correct. The virtuous teacher, here [I will] specifically state the importance of having received virtuous teachings from a virtuous teacher. Similarly, often we rely on ourselves whether it is to study or to learn; it all requires guidance from experienced teacher. Thus, in this passage, it is to say, well, these two [Nagarjuna and Asanga] explained the most beneficial teachings from Buddha, which allows us to achieve in-depth understanding. As a result, their influence is not merely on the humans, but also on the deity realm and below the earth, inclusively everywhere. Buddha predicted in the Sutras that, during the future degenerate times, revitalizing [his] teachings to their fullest extent would be reliant on these two! Now, let's continue on to the next verse.

**[2B, 13.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P56 L11]
I bow to Dipamkara [Atisha], bearer of the treasury of instructions**

**That comprise the key points, unmistakable and complete,
Of the paths of the profound view and vast deeds,
Transmitted well from those two great trailblazers.**

Passed down from this lineage, there is another great teacher – this great teacher was called Atisha! Atisha is a respectful name in Tibetan. He was an Indian. At that time in India, it was the equivalent time to our early Song dynasty in China. His time was between Song-Tai-Chung [and] the second emperor of the Song dynasty - Song-Ren-Chung, around AD 900 to 1000 [982-1054]. This great scholar was a prince in East India. From a very young age, he had the yearning to be a monk, he just wanted to be ordained, [he

was] absolutely wise. The book [biography of Atisha] that I gave you should be studied with great care. As a teenager, in his teens, he studied some conventional knowledge - the Science of Logic. Well, this Science of Logic for us is very difficult. However, as a teenager, he heard it just once and he was able to apply the [Buddhist Science of Logic] reasoning in debate. He even won over the most prominent scholar at the time in a debate. Wow! Fabulous! In the future, if you really advance into more profound study, you will all have the opportunity to learn the Buddhist Science of Logic. You must realize that this Buddhist Science of Logic is extremely difficult to learn. This is to show how wise this Venerable Atisha was.

[2B, 15.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P57 L7]

He was born to a royal family and, later, he was ordained. From then on, he studied Hinayana, Mahayana, profound-view, extensive-deeds; [he became] proficient and erudite in all of them. Eventually, in India, he was considered the crown jewel of the Buddhist domain. It was described in his biography; I will not go into detail. This great practitioner flawlessly combined both trailblazers, both Mahayana lineages - one representing “profound view” the other “extensive deeds” - in its entirety. Not only did he combine them into one, but he also completed it flawlessly, this is the essence of Buddha’s teaching. Now let’s pay our homage to this great practitioner!

[C 地譯者問過兩組法師：性宗=深見；相宗=廣行嗎？

一組法師回答：前者是宗派名，后者是所持的見解。漢係裡表示有些不同。

另一組說：藏係裡兩者可通用 see 3B translation]

[2B, 16.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P57 L13]

Here, we have to clarify one thing, which is what we have already understood: Buddha is the source of this encompassing teaching, the root of the encompassing Dharma! This complete teaching was mainly composed using great compassion and great wisdom - or the two categories of compassion and wisdom. For us, this compassion is to obtain our merits, or blissful merits; wisdom is to enhance the merits to achieve perfection and to eliminate contamination, [we] rely on wisdom. In other words, one is the cause to achieve Sambhogakaya [body of bliss - compassion], one is the cause to achieve Dharmakaya [body of absolute - wisdom], and the Nirmanakaya [body of incarnation] is included in the Sambhogakaya - the reward body, that's that.

[2B, 17.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P58 L4]

As for this lineage, the formation of the teaching is passed down like this, in this manner. Then, when the alignment [to the teachings] is slowly and gradually reducing [in the world], by the same token, the remaining teaching is also slowly, gradually diminishing. So [in the first verse], the first was two virtually enlightened Bodhisattvas, the higher beings; followed by the junior level [Bodhisattvas]. Just like the education in contemporary schools, they are the professors of the university, but we are only at high school or elementary school levels. Thus, the understanding will not arise! We need to be taught by high school or elementary school teachers, that's that. But why was it transmitted to one person [Atisha] without dividing into two [lineages of profound-view and extensive-deeds], just combined into this one person? There is a very special reason, a very unique reason! During the transmission of a given lineage, there will be a natural tendency, especially for

those endowed with wisdom - [they] tend to lean toward one side and neglect the compassionate part of practice. While, on the contrary, those practicing great compassion will neglect wisdom.

[2B, 18.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P58 L13]

For instance, many cases in our conventional world, many people talked about their work - Dharma Works, their Dharma Works; they expand the work to a wide range. However, gradually, they will appear to be separating from the teachings. While others will stick to obeying the teaching, abiding by the teaching, but the [Dharma] works are gradually shrinking and shrinking. In this light, it is not easy to achieve the encompassing solution. For personal practice, these [two situations] will not have much impact; whereas to pervade the complete teaching, this is not sufficient, that's that. Thus, under any situation, the alignment with the two [wisdom and compassion] has to be balanced to perfect the teaching.

[2B, 19.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P59 L4]

Similarly, it is the same with our learning. In fact, each one of us has a different innate character. If you can recognize and be aware of this point, your advancement will be the easiest and most complete. Those leaning toward wisdom should not neglect compassion; those leaning toward compassion should not neglect wisdom either. Otherwise, it is obvious that applying too much skillful-means, or in contemporary terms, “[being] too lax in skillful-means leads to downfall,” then be done with it! From the appearance, [being too flexible in skillful-means] brings about a lack of taste, and [will be viewed by people around us] as in a mess. As a matter of fact, it will lead to downfall. Even though, with kind intentions, you want to promote the

Dharma and apply the teaching, after all the effort, [you] end up in the hell realm! Then you would be better off not applying the teaching! Thus, proper alignment with the two [wisdom and compassion] in their entirety at all times is very important.

[2B, 20.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P59 L11]

Here, [Atisha] the great teacher displayed his capacity! He abided by the perfect teaching with flawless alignment, that's that. As for his manifested disposition on the path, which is unknown to us, according to his biography, [it happened] when he was newly ordained, just ordained! His attainment was above path-of-preparation [the 2nd level on the path to Buddhahood]. This [attainment of] path-of-preparation is equivalent to the great master in China - it should be the two patriarchs from the Tian-tai lineage: Tian-tai Master Zhi-zhe and his teacher Hui-si Zen Master - well, their attainment was very high! There was a patriarch called Han-shan Master, he was one of the four Major Monks in the late Ming dynasty. Most people regarded him as the primary of the four monks of the late Ming period; that means he was the greatest among the four. People asked him, "Master, you are extraordinary! You should be equivalent to the ancient [sages]...." They tried to mention several ancient sages for comparison, namely a few such as Tian-tai Master Zhi-zhe. Master Han-shan replied, "Wait! How can I be compared with Master Zhi-zhe, I am only at the level of recognizing the enlightened Buddha nature, the Master [Zhi-zhe] is at a much higher level!"

[2B, 21.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P60 L5]

Why do I specifically use this example? At our level, if we do not have genuine recognition, we easily become arrogant. Well, when we hear that someone attained

enlightenment, we take it as achieving Buddhahood. Not so! There are various levels of enlightenment, ordinary beings also can achieve [a certain degree of] enlightenment, [the enlightenment of ordinary beings] is possible – Buddha also [achieved his enlightenment gradually]. The same applies to Tian-tai Master Zhi-zhe. Let me explain it further: for Master Han-shan, such a remarkable practitioner, he highly venerated the Tian-tai Master Zhi-zhe. As for Tian-tai Master Zhi-zhe, before he passed away, his disciple asked him, “Master, what level have you attained on the stage of realization?” “I am only at the fifth rank, only the fifth rank.” This is still at the “stage of seeing”, and his teacher actually attained the “stage of resemblance.” This Venerable Atisha of ours, he was not the least [of these enlightened beings], - just after his ordination, well, prior to his ordination, he beseeched teachers. All of his teachers at least had attained path-of-preparation, many of them were at Bodhisattvas levels. They shared their experience with him and he applied them accordingly, and, instantly, he achieved the same accomplishment [as his teachers]. Such an extraordinary being, he was later ordained as monk for several decades.

[2B, 22.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P61 L1]

He beseeched virtuous teachers from his teens until he died in his seventies; you can imagine what a high level of achievement he reached. But he never claimed - at least in his biography - he did not specify “where I am on the path,” this was not stated. At least it is mentioned here that this great teacher [Atisha] upheld Buddha’s complete teaching. This was why, when he was in India, all Buddhism schools highly venerated him - for those chanting Buddha’s name, by following his teaching, you would have achievement; for those meditators applying his teaching, you would have

attainment too. Whether it was Zen, Pure Land, precepts, Tantra, or tenet teachings, your accomplishments were due to his guidance. Therefore, in this passage, it shows the lineage with its special meaning. Then, followed by those other than these primary teachers of the lineage, other related teachers, the next verse.

[2B, 23.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P61 L8]

I bow with the respect to the teachers

Who, with deeds of skill in means moved by loving concern,

Illuminate for the fortunate the gateway leading to liberation,

The eye for reviewing all the limitless scriptures.

Other than the teachers of the lineage, many associated virtuous teachers were included, too. And what are their characteristics – “reviewing all.” This “all” is overall without any bias but with what? “Limitless scriptures”: This includes all scriptures taught by Buddha - teachings from all Buddhas. He [all these great teachers in the lineage] comprehended the perceptions of the “fortunate” ones, which means those endowed with Buddha nature; we often refer to these as the three virtuous levels and the ten stages of sages (三賢十聖). Those with genuine virtuous roots that have already traversed on the Mahayana path, thus “the gateway to liberation,” represent the Mahayana; these are the [qualities] of the patriarchs. Due to his [Lama Tsong-kha-pa’s] compassion, [he] applied various skillful means to depict the laudability of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas - those virtuous teachers who taught us. This is the veneration. On one hand, through paying [our] veneration [we] beseech blessings and eliminate obstacles; on the other hand, it displays the lineage that reveals the objects of

our veneration.

(C 地譯者註:)

Progressive ranks of the 52 Bodhisattva's positions in cultivation:		
The 1st 10	10 faiths 十信	
The 2 nd 10	10 dwellings 十住	These 3 are called: <u>three virtuous levels</u> 三賢
The 3 rd 10	10 Bodhisattva activities 十行	
The 4 th 10	10 dedication 十迴向	
The 5 th 10	10 stages 十地	
51st 等覺	Omniscience. A quality of and term for a Buddha; also the 51st stage in the enlightenment of a bodhisattva, the attainment of the Buddha, enlightenment which precedes 妙覺.	
52nd 妙覺	Capacity for the fully enlightened ones to help others' enlightenment.	
<u>10 stages of sages</u> : Mahayana Bodhisattvas between 1st level and 10 th level 十聖.		

[2B, 24.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P62 L3]

So if we are serious in wanting to learn from Buddha, it is very important to rely on virtuous teachers like those we mentioned earlier. What is a virtuous teacher? It will be covered in more detail later. However, [we] need to truly recognize that, without wisdom, you are not able to

distinguish [who is] a virtuous teacher. One easy way is, in other words, what is his genealogy? What is his lineage? These aspects should not be confused; this is an angle that we can distinguish without wisdom. You can follow [this angle] and confirm the perfect qualities of the virtuous teacher - here, he [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] briefly explained this point too - that is also the genuine advantage of this text, that's that.

[2B, 25.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P62 L8]

Then, what is this followed by? The second part is called the "Purpose of composing this Treatise." Once the veneration is there, the author begins to compose the treatise. This is to explain the purpose of composing this treatise, what is the objective? What kind of effect is expected, with what kind of effect? Let's take a look at it.

[2B, 25.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P62 L11]

Nowadays those making effort at yoga have studied few [of the classic texts],

While those who have studied much are not skilled in the key points of practice.

English LR V.1 p.34

They tend to view the scriptures through the eyes of partisanship,

Unable to use reason to discriminate the meaning of the scriptures.

There are many practitioners these days! "Yoga" translated into Chinese means being in accordance. A real practitioner will never be merely empty talk; [they] will definitely abide by the teaching and align with it in application. Thus, yoga generally is divided into object, application, reasoning, and effect (境、行、理、果). That

is to say whatever arising objects, how to apply concordantly, based on what reasoning and what the effect will be, etc. - there is a certain approach. The effect is based on where you are in the stage of practice, step-by-step, not just by empty talk. However, nowadays, the practitioners, they talk about application without knowing the reasoning. May I ask, without understanding the reasoning - this reasoning supports the application - without it, how do you apply the teaching? We are like building a cart behind closed doors [refer to example in 1B]. In fact, to be overly subjective and disregard the outside world, at least you make some progress! Yet, [this type of practitioner] is spinning idly without any progress, not only wasting a lifetime, but also living with empty effort for eons. This is a pity, very unfortunate!

[2B, 27.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P63 L6]

Then, [we will] say: right, right, right! Since [we] need to apply the teaching, it requires more understanding and study. As a result of studying more, then “while those who have studied much are not skilled in the key points of practice,” upon hearing a lot of reasoning, they [some practitioners] fumble around on the usage of the words and are not skillful in the actual practice. This is one type [of practitioner]. Another type of mistake is studying much but, instead of applying the teaching on the self, he messes in affairs of others. This happens very easily, for it is normal to ordinary living beings. Often, for most of us with this beginningless latent propensity, it is not easy to spot ourselves but very easy to check on others. For worldly beings, naturally the standard is worldly; everyone’s sincerity is just marginal. Now you are learning the teaching from Buddha, then the standard should be raised higher. However, you take this high standard to measure others -

that is not good! It is like a magical mirror for goblins, take a look at it: everyone in this world is a goblin or demon; there is not one decent one, everybody except one - the self! This is the case, a very serious situation!

[3A, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P67 L1]

We discussed the “Purpose of Composing this Treatise” earlier. What was the purpose of composing this text? What were his aims and expectations? We have briefly gone over [it], and today we will continue. When referring to “nowadays,” it does not mean our present time - it is Lama Tsong-kha-pa’s time, which was five, almost six hundred years ago. In fact, the condition of the lineage at that time was much, much better than it is today. What was the situation then? It was already such: those yoga practitioners did not apply study of philosophical reasoning - the reasoning that teaches us why and how to practice. You must know why you need practice; this force will motivate you to practice, and then encourage you to apply [the teachings]. Furthermore, it teaches you how to practice and, in the process, how to validate right from wrong experiential effects, etc. These need the preparation of theoretical understanding before application. Now, you lack these preconditions – may I ask, how can your application be correct? As a result, you turn into a practitioner who says they practiced but does not necessarily achieve the proper effect. Often, we describe this as “practicing blindly and meditating aimlessly” (盲修瞎練) - we end up wasting an entire lifetime. In fact, once the negative habit is formed, it will last for many lives and eons, how regrettable!

[3A, 02.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P68 L2]

In another case: oh, meditation actually begins from hearing the teachings. So this practitioner indeed abides by

the systematic order to listen. Originally, [this is] hearing followed by studying what was heard and then immediately applying the teachings - that is the true purpose of hearing the teachings. Unfortunately, there is another [common] mistake: those who hear the teachings do not apply them properly. Thus, there are those who “study much” but are not “skilled in the key points of practice,” that is the scenario. Therefore the result is that those who study much use a lot of hollow words and those yoga practitioners engage in blind and aimless efforts. This is very regrettable!

[3A, 03.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P68 L7]

Indeed, sometimes we encounter this kind of situation. For instance, the Sixth Patriarch [of Chinese Zen lineage] who did not seem to have extensive cognition, yet why did he have such good qualities? We need to understand this. He accumulated prerequisites from eons ago, with the pre-established foundation. In this mundane world, what we can see is perhaps only decades or even a century. From the perspective of the entirety of Buddhism, [time] begins from the infinite past to the infinite future. As for the stages of practice, it begins from what is completely unknown to advance step-by-step, after encountering Buddha’s teachings, until ultimate perfection is reached. This process must go through: initiating the motivation, relying on the virtuous teacher, and properly listen to the encompassing scriptural teaching. Upon hearing the teachings, properly reflect on their true meaning and then apply them earnestly. This is the required course and it will take eons of lifetimes.

[3A, 04.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P68 L14]

Actually, some groups of people have already acquired certain efforts in the past. Upon entering this present life, they are endowed with such prerequisites. As for the

majority of ordinary beings, we should recognize this. If you lack this understanding and just quote or read by distorting partial statements, this is not appropriate, it is a flawed way of learning. If this is the way to be, I would think that we don't need to mimic the Sixth Patriarch as a role model, which may not be the best; why don't you follow Buddha as the example? The Sixth Patriarch was enlightened by hearing one verse - and this is only enlightenment! Whereas Buddha, who [seems to] not have heard any verses before he left for ordination [in this given lifetime], eventually sat by the riverbank of the Nairanjananadi and looked up one night to see the moon then attained his ultimate enlightenment - Buddhahood. If we can have this achievement [of Buddha's], then following the footsteps of the Sixth Patriarch may be less effective! Why should we emulate the Sixth Patriarch? If it were me, I would rather mimic Buddha. I would go to India, sit on the same spot and raise my head to look and achieve [my] Buddhahood! This is what we should recognize!

[3A, 06.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P69 L9]

Due to the aforementioned situation, it is [important] not to lean toward either extreme, for either case produces various flaws. So it says, "They tend to view the scriptures through the eyes of partisanship," [which means] being unable to comprehend all of Buddha's teachings - [the understanding] is fragmented and incomplete. That is why, at his time, Buddha taught us a very good piece of advice: often we are like a blind person touching an elephant - yes, we have touched the elephant and, at that moment, we recognize the [part of the] elephant we touched. After all, we are blind and we only have touched it partially! [We] definitely need to try our best to comprehend, to hear more, and to study the entirety of the content. [We need to]

forsake our grasping, this is very important.

[3A, 06.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P70 L1]

Not only is our personal recognition like this, but our rational cognition is also weak - [we need to] properly and thoroughly distinguish Buddha's reasoning in its entirety. In fact, to comprehend and to distinguish should be two separate items – this is rational differentiation. [The Chinese] word “speech,” which has its reason, [I] will cover it briefly. Generally, for scholarly studies, we often have a saying, “truth is clarified through debates.” Indeed, as an individual you can contemplate, observe, and distinguish; however, the effect of scholarly debate back and forth over and over again is much more efficient. Let's not use academic study [as example]; we often have our worldly experience: sitting there alone, you may feel bored. But when two people get together, a topic is initiated and then turns into contention. Frequently, we have a common term for it - “bone of contention” (抬槓子) - or, in Buddhism, “digression” (沖殼子). Alas, while having a “bone of contention” or being in “digression,” the discussion will become more and more enthusiastic, hotter and hotter; thus, [you become] engaged in more excitement.

[3A, 08.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P70 L10]

The same applies to learning Buddha's teachings: if we know how to take advantage of this characteristic [of proper discussion or debate], we will be able to yield a more profound effect. However, the debate has to have its complete set of approaches. For instance, the Buddhism logic we know of now was improved by Bodhisattvas Dignaga (陳那) and Dharmakirti (法稱). This is a very skillful debating method and one of the best tools used in Dharma

practice. Thus, we refer it here as: we neither have the capability to distinguish with reasoning, nor do we have such motivation to study debate. For this reason, at the individual level, we are not able to grasp the essence of Buddha's teachings, just like a blind person touching an elephant. At same time, we are not skillful enough to distinguish this all-encompassing teaching. Thus, [we] wind up in a detour or on the wrong path. Therefore, on this complete path with Buddha's proper guidance, we take it to a wrong turn. So next it says: departing from the path that pleases the wise.

[3A, 09.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P71 L3]

For us to truly realize Buddha's teaching, it requires various conditions, many conditions. The encompassing Buddha teachings, generally speaking, are: compassion and wisdom (悲智), followed by profound-view (性宗) and extensive-deeds (相宗). Ascending from this hierarchy, they are: study, reflection, the wisdom that arises from meditation (聞、思、修慧), and the three precious trainings of ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom (戒、定、慧三學). Each aspect needs to be built layer upon layer with the structure of cause and effect [for us] to advance. This is definitely not unbalanced, not partial (片面、局部). In order to advance with complete guidance, a laudable teaching is required.

[Note: see 3B for 師父's explanation of 性宗/深見;相宗/
廣行]

[3A, 10.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P71 L7]

These “instructions” will be elaborated here. There is a specific meaning for [this term], which refers to going through virtuous teachers to grasp the contents of sutras and treatises. In other words, sutras and treatises are the guidance from all Buddhas for us ordinary beings. From the stage of ordinary being all the way to the perfection of Buddhahood, this intention is the key point [of the guidance from the virtuous teachers]. So where the intricate details are (本末何在), furthermore the systematic order of Mahayana and Hinayana as well as various crucial factors - these are “instructions.” For instance, often when we read a book, upon finishing it, [we] are not able to grasp its main theme or further related points – [we] lack this knowledge. Likewise, how do the profound-view and extensive-deeds [lineages] complement each other? How is the lesser vehicle [practitioner] enabled to advance step-by-step? There are inevitable mutual relationships. If you can comprehend this, this state of complementing each other is absolutely required. If you cannot comprehend this, various flaws will arise.

[3A, 12.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P72 L1]

At the present moment, we often hear this description: opposition between [the lineages of] profound-view and extensive-deeds. These two schools are like two horns of a bull, each with their own standing. In fact, it is just the opposite – these two lineages of profound-view and extensive-deeds must align with each other, just like reinforced concrete. With both of them - a steel bar with cement and cement with a steel bar – a house can be established with perfect structure. Now, you take them apart, disassemble the bone with bone and flesh with flesh, and you cannot align with either, wouldn't that be terrible? Where is the difference? It lacks proper instruction. Now,

with the most excellent instructions, upon receiving them, you are then able to fully understand what the Buddha taught.

[3A, 12.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P72 L7]

So, up to this point, let me mention one thing. For example, we often say that, among our present lineage from the Buddha, the Tripitakas and twelve branches of Buddhism scripture (三藏十二部), there are two encompassing [sutras], two of them. The so-called most thorough and complete teachings of Buddha's experience of external and internal realization are presented in their entirety. They are the Sutras that teach us ordinary beings the entire contents from this stage [as an ordinary being] all the way to the ultimate enlightenment. They are considered the encompassing Sutras: one is the *Lotus Sutra*; the other is the *Array of Stalks Sutra*. The above are their general aspects. In other words, from the perspective of the end result, both the *Lotus Sutra* and the *Array of Stalks Sutra* teach [us] that the ultimate goal is Buddhahood.

[3A, 14.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P72 L13]

However, from another angle, there is an extreme difference between the two. In the beginning of the *Lotus Sutra*, [Buddha] assured everyone that they could attain perfect enlightenment - even including those of the lesser vehicle, wisdom foremost Sariputra, etc. Finally, [Buddha] said that, other than the arhats, Buddhahood is eventually possible for anyone as long as [this person] encountered Buddha's teaching once and retained the seeds. Therefore, in the *Lotus Sutra* it says, "If a person with a scattered mind enters a stupa or temple, with one hail of Namō Buddha, this person is predicted to make achievements on the path to Buddhahood." An ordinary being with a scattered mind

like us, casually enters a temple and is pleased to see the statue of Buddha, and exclaims once: “Oh, Namó Buddha.” With this single hailing of Buddha, this seed will eventually lead to the achievement of Buddhahood. Specifically, Buddhahood will be achieved at very end! But the amount of time to attain Buddhahood from planting the seed to ultimate completion spans immeasurable eons. That astronomical figure is totally beyond our imagination! Ordinary beings, even for the arhats of lesser vehicle like great wisdom Sariputra, etc., they have to go through a very long, astronomically long period of time to attain Buddhahood. Such is the duration of time needed to achieve Buddhahood!

[3A, 15.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P73 L9]

As for the other encompassing sutra, what about the *Array of Stalks Sutra*? The youthful Sudhana relied on the “fulfillment of ten stages of faith” and abided by Bodhisattva [Samantabhadra’s] ten primary vows to finally be transmitted into the realm of Utmost-Joy [極樂] in one lifetime. The difference [between these two practitioners - Sariputra and youthful Sudhana - in the two sutras] is sky high; the difference is so huge, too far apart! Supposedly, between the two we say: well, taking longer to attain Buddhahood is fine as long as we can enjoy our bliss in the deity realms, so it is not a bother to slow down the pace. [We] should know that, within the astronomical length of time, for the majority of that period, [we] spend most of the time in the miserable realms submerged in unrelenting suffering! We cannot bear even a speck of suffering right now, let alone for such a long time. Thus, the length of time is absolutely crucial. In both cases, they achieved Buddhahood. But, with regard to the crucial decision point, if we have the opportunity, capability, and the personal

choice, [we] would definitely take the speedy one and never take the slow choice.

[3A, 16.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P74 L1]

Now, the question is, between these two, why one is so fast while the other is so slow? Well, that is: whether you have attained the encompassing instruction and exhortation! Once you have it, the realization will be in this life! Otherwise, sorry to say, you will have a big detour to circle around. This key point is correct, but where are the encompassing teachings? Laudable instructions are required. Well, so when Lama Tsong-kha-pa saw this meaning and examined the present situation, he said, “I was inspired to explain this path of great trailblazers.” Well, that tells us to take on this all-encompassing Mahayana path.

[3A, 17.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P74 L6]

We often say “Mahayana” instead of “great vehicle,” there is a reason for the term “great vehicle.” In the *Lotus Sutra*, through the parable of goat, deer, and ox carts, Buddha revealed to us that the true purpose of his appearance in our world was to give the best to all living beings. So the attributes used in the parable were for beings of various natures but, in the end, it was the very same great white ox cart. Therefore, the “great trailblazer” represents the ultimate perfection, the most thorough, most complete, most upright path. Here, Lama Tsong-kha-pa noticed the above unfavorable situation and explained: Ah, so this was the ultimate, laudable, complete, and perfect path. From this, we are able to understand the true contents of Lamrim, which are extremely marvelous, peerlessly perfect!

[3A, 18.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P74 L12]

For my personal experience, after I began my initial study of the teaching, [I] faced various hardships. Although there are admittedly disputes between the Mahayana and the Hinayana, and even mutual incompatibility, to us, it is not our immediate concern. Hinayana is the southern lineage, while ours is Mahayana. But at our present time, even though we consider ourselves as Mahayana, I'm sorry to say, even within Mahayana there are various issues. Some support the profound-view, others are for the extensive-deeds; and there are also the Mind-only school (教下) and the Zen-meditation School (宗下). Some emphasize application and some emphasize [their own philosophical view]. Even within the same Zen-meditation school, I'm sorry to say, there are divisions between the five sects and seven lineages (五家七宗). Likewise, to chant Buddhas' name alone, there are also different lineages. They cannot accept each other. I really don't know how to resolve this!

*[*Lotus Sutra chapter 3: a parable told by Buddha to Sariputra - there was a wealthy elder who had a mansion. One day, it caught on fire and all his children were playing inside and did not want to leave, even after the father called to them anxiously. Finally, the father coaxed them with 3 carts pull by deer, goat and ox, respectively. Then, the children ran out of the mansion to find that there was only the ox cart. The 3 carts represent: sravaka, pratyekabuddha and Bodhisattva. Buddha's intention of only having the ox cart is to guide us to our Buddhahood.]*

[3A, 19.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P75 L3]

It was not until [I] encountered Lamrim, even until after I understood it, did I not only completely resolve this issue,

but I also recognized that the contradiction never existed. Furthermore, they complement each other, are in accord with each other. Therefore, the key is that we lack understanding of the encompassing teachings. Here I will briefly mention, for instance we are applying the teaching now, we might misunderstand that: oh, our application has to wait until we have completed all of the learning. This is not the case – you continue with your routine chanting of Buddha’s name, I continue with my routine Zen meditation. Provided that you enhance it with skillful means [from learning the Lamrim teachings], whether it is Zen meditation or chanting Buddha’s name, the effect will be very different [compared to not studying Lamrim].

[3A, 20.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P75 L8]

I will mention an example here. If I may ask, in the case of our time now, [those who practice by] chanting Buddha’s name are the largest population [of Buddhists]; in fact, [this practice] does have the best fit for our present condition, a very appropriate Dharma approach. During the time of degeneration, [this is] the best approach for us to be liberated from affliction, and no other approach is better than chanting Buddha’s name that is for sure. But great teachers told us that if ten thousand people applied this approach, they all would fulfill the wish [of being reborn in Pure Land], and this is certainly very true. However, why is it that we applied it so hard but [we are] not there yet? Isn’t it a big question? Of course, there are many reasons. Hence, I will cover them briefly here. What is the reason that we ordinary beings cannot make it there [to pure land]? It is because our obstacles are weighty and lack sufficient wisdom merits. Therefore, we have to remove the obstacles and accumulate merits, and then dedicate these merits [toward this goal]. Once you have enough merits, you should be

able to be reborn [to Pure Land]; this perception should be very clear.

[3A, 21.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P76 L1]

Now let us not talk about anything else, for the sake of chanting Buddha's name, so I focus on the chanting - this is appropriate. However, often we will have a question - we have just mentioned it - in fact, we have not attained the encompassing teaching yet. Thus, by traveling on this personal entrance, it is very likely [that we tend] to overlook mutual understanding [of other practitioner's application]. What is more, we shut out [others' Dharma approach]. "Shutting out" is a very serious hindrance.

[Note 英廣同學問什麼是 Pure Land: the pure altruistic mind state of Buddha or Bodhisattva

他們比較能接受的是一個 affliction 較少的地方,因為既不是 Nirvana, 又不是 deity realm 那是什麼...]

[3A, 22.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P76 L5]

Buddha expressed clearly that, for the sake of helping all sentient beings, he beseeched all kinds of Dharma approaches. All of them were to resolve [the suffering] of all living beings. Dharma sees no difference between the Mahayana or the Hinayana, the key is to be in accord with [the Dharma approach] to the arising condition, align with it. Buddha went through eons of sacrificing his physical forms to accumulate the Dharma teachings, thus the Dharma has immeasurable value. Now we randomly deny it and slander it; unknowingly, we form obstacles by slandering the teachings. As Dharma practitioners, we should understand that, as the Sutra taught us, if you commit the five heinous crimes [v.1 p.389 #195] and ten nonvirtuous deeds, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can help you repent to remove the retributions. However, if you slander the teachings, sorry

to tell you, there is no help. Now, if we practitioners slander the teachings, what will the consequences be? Hindrances will increase immeasurably! You exert great efforts in chanting Buddha's name, but the merits accumulated may not be there [for you]. You randomly reject others, producing tremendous obstacles; with this little bit [of effort from chanting merits] will you be able to go [to Pure Land]? Not only are you unable to go [to Pure Land], but you also accumulate a lot of transgressions. So I bring up this case here.

[3A, 24.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P76 L14]

That is to say, if we have a general understanding - not necessarily at very thorough level, just a little deeper understanding - at that time, we will realize, ah, it is correct. Applying Dharma requires this type of thoroughness. Whatever current conditions I am facing that inconvenience my study to a profound or extensive level, I aspire to be able to study well in the future! Thus, the seed to study profoundly and extensively is planted at the causal stage with this penitent mind; I wholeheartedly concentrate on pleading to this great teacher by chanting Amitabha's (阿彌陀佛) name. So you just focus on [your chanting], this is one aspect.

[3A, 24.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P77 L5]

On another aspect, when there is someone around [you] - whether he is spreading his teaching or is into his Zen meditation - once [we have] proper understanding [of the teaching], I believe we will have this thought, "Yes, to preserve Buddha's teaching is truly not an easy task! Buddha went through immeasurable eons, sacrificing his physical forms to accumulate these all-encompassing

teachings and to circulate them in the world. As Buddha's disciple, we should strive hard to pervade and uphold the teaching. However, my ability is limited to chanting Buddha's name for now, I already feel embarrassed. Seeing him [practitioner of other practices] pervading and upholding the teaching, I sincerely rejoice!" In this condition, the appropriate response is to say, "Yes, I will pervade the teaching, but my capability is not enough, so I settle for chanting Buddha's name. In this case, at the present... if everyone chanted with this mentality, then will the teaching gradually, slowly remain at the chanting level and nothing more? Fortunately, he [this diligent practitioner] works hard here [to preserve his practice]; I praise and rejoice his efforts. I will continue with my chanting! What happens is: on the one hand your practice of praising others increases your merits; on the other hand, we mutually praise each other. Buddha's teaching thrives through mutual support, and our merits increase without impacting your chanting.

[3A, 26.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P77 L15]

In this condition, what is the difference? The former occurs in spite of your chanting, but you engaged in slandering the teaching, which generated tremendous grief and nonvirtuous consequences. Any speck of merit accumulated is offset by the nonvirtuous karma plus thirty percent overhead [retribution]; unknowingly, [we] created so much debt. Therefore, obviously the best Dharma approach is to deliver ten thousand people who practice it [chanting Buddha's name], yet [we] chanted for so long without any sign of going [to Pure Land]. Once you have this understanding, without changing your application, the effect becomes great - this is the first point. Secondly, because you already had this thought at the causal stage, "Yes, I will definitely seek perfect Dharma; I will start from this route..."

Once you arrive at the joyous Pure Land, you will think, “Now I am here, I need to learn extensively and profoundly.” Very quickly, this seed [planted at the causal stage] will be inspired to continue on this direct path. Otherwise, even though you are there [Pure land], the seed planted at the causal stage begins to sprout and may still lead you back to the original path. At least at that time, you have to start all over again from repenting and so on. Wouldn’t this be a waste of all of this time? This is what we have to recognize. No matter which perfect path you plan to take, or whichever Dharma approach you have engaged in now, we should recognize this concept. Therefore, this encompassing teaching [Lamrim] is truly good for us, absolutely good for us.

[3A, 27.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P78 L11]

Now that Lama Tsong-kha-pa has revealed the essence to us, the key is to preserve the encompassing teaching in its entirety in this world. It is good for you to learn from the perfect teaching; for all others, as long as they get it, benefit will arise wherever [you] apply [the teaching]. Therefore, [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] exhorted the encompassing teaching, he saw the true nature of reality, understood the concept, and he was filled with joy. With this perfect teaching, all the flaws can be rectified and Buddha Dharma will thrive. This is the persistent aspiration and consistent deeds of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. So he said, [I was inspired to explain this path of the great trailblazers] “Therefore, I am pleased widely and vigorously in mind.” Ah, filled with joy! Joyous! The degree of joy is wide and vigorous! Wide and vigorous does not mean superficial or shallow, for the mental capacity of Buddha and Bodhisattva are such [wide and vigorous]. Therefore, this is [Lama Tsong-kha-pa’s] “Purpose of Composing this Treatise.”

[3B, 00.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P81 L1]

Lama Tsong-kha-pa made a comment at the end: earnestly listen to the teaching. Upon saying this, he repeatedly advised us with great kindness, “You should listen very carefully and practice accordingly!”

[3B, 00.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P81 L3]

**All those fortunate ones who are unobscured by the darkness of partisanship,
Who have the mental capacity to differentiate good and bad,
And who wish to make meaningful this good life of leisure
Should listen with one-pointed attention**

With the [introduction] above for these encompassing and perfect teachings, it is the most complete and direct guidance on this grand path for us. However, not everyone has the opportunity to learn it! What are the prerequisites to learn [the path]? It is in the next section: for those endowed with these prerequisites, what are the prerequisites? “Those are unobscured by the darkness of partisanship.” The partisanship, clinging, and darkness can be explained in two aspects: general and specific. Generally, it is our ignorant obstacles. Specifically, “partisanship” refers to an inclination either toward nihilism or toward eternalism. Buddha taught [us] to take the middle way. Other than Buddha, all the rest [of the people in this world] are leaning on the side of either nihilism or eternalism, this is partisanship. What about the clinging? It means grasping, which is everywhere; to sum it up generally, they are the self-of-the-person and the self-of-the-knowledge (人我執、法我執). As for darkness, it means the darkness of ignorance, which is the root. Is being unobscured sufficient? No! What are the other

requirements? They also need to have the “capacity to differentiate good and bad.” What is this capacity? It is “mental capacity” - wisdom, this wisdom is of superior power. This power is required as well.

[3B, 02.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P82 L4]

Therefore, one is unobscured by the darkness of partisanship and has the mental capacity to differentiate good and bad, is it enough? No, not yet. Although he has the ability to differentiate, he lacks earnest aspiration (好樂心). It is of no use! Earnest aspiration and joyfulness are required - ah! I am in need of this [teaching]. What does the earnest practitioner possess? “Wishing to make meaningful this good life of leisure.” Those sincere and earnest practitioners, they aspire to meditate and are also endowed with the capacity and the ability to distinguish between virtue and nonvirtue, also are not obscured by the darkness of partisanship. Then, what does it mean by wishing to make this life of leisure meaningful? In order to practice, actually everyone has thought about it, but not everyone is endowed with the condition to do so. What does it mean? We may be in doubt – why does everyone want to practice? That is right! For contemporary Buddhism, certainly not everyone would like to practice. To practice alone [is a very difficult task], but to urge others have faith in the Buddha is even more difficult, how can we say that everyone wants to practice? The reason will be briefly disclosed here.

[3B, 04.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P82 L12]

What is the real purpose of Buddha’s teachings? This we should look into. Normally, we talk about Buddha’s teachings - what are these teachings? There are the

Tripitaka and the twelve branches of the Buddhist canon. By glancing at it, one look generates a headache, wow, so many texts! By looking at them, [you] are not able to understand them at all. Specifically [regarding]: greater and lesser vehicles, profound-view and extensive-deeds, Mahayana and Tantrayana. These make it hard for you to decide which is right; this is the fact [that we are facing now]. But if you can penetrate it and carefully explore its purpose - which is in fact extremely simple - what is the purpose? Two words: happiness and suffering. Avoid suffering and flawlessly attain happiness, just like that. Based on these two standards, no one in the world is exempt. Everyone is actually bustling about for nothing but this [happiness and suffering]. No matter whether he [a typical worldly person] is rationally seeking for a certain goal, for the engagement he is most involved in, you ask him, what is his purpose for this activity? He is certainly searching for this [avoiding suffering and attaining happiness]. For those emotionally confused ones, he may be confused, but why is he confused? If you help him internalize it, it is still this [avoiding suffering and attaining happiness]. Therefore, the reason why the secular world cannot achieve true happiness is due to the lack of understanding of the true nature of happiness and suffering, as well as their causes. Without knowing the true nature of reality, whatever [we] engage in will be wrong. Buddha is the only one who can distinguish this clearly in its entirety.

[3B, 05.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P83 L7]

The reason why most people truly don't understand, or are not inspired to practice is the lack of understanding of Buddha's Teachings. Once you all have a true understanding of the teaching, no one will be an exception [i.e., everyone will want to avoid suffering and attain

happiness]. Not only human beings, even in the three [desire, form, formless] realms (三界), such as a small beetle. Oh yes, it will run away if you get closer to it. Why? It is afraid of being hurt. It also fears suffering. In other words, it also desires to avoid suffering. Any little insects will be attracted by good food despite risking its life. Like a mosquito that knowingly bites you, it may be swatted to death but it still keeps on sucking your blood. It seeks its happiness. There is no exception.

[3B, 06.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P83 L12]

Although, there are no exceptions that everyone wants to practice. In spite of the inspiration to do so, the pre-condition is insufficient. Animals are not able to practice; only human beings are capable. Even with a human form, that is not sufficient, it still requires various pre-conditions. Therefore, the person who is able to practice has what is called a human life of leisure and opportunity. This is very rare to find, very rare, extremely rare! So in Buddhism we often say: it is difficult to attain this human form, which is referred to as a human life of leisure and opportunity. Now that we have obtained it, well, better hurry up [to practice]! [We] should take advantage of this opportunity for true happiness and eliminate true suffering. There is only one method - this is it [taking proper advantage of the leisure and opportunity]. Thus, for those endowed with the above conditions, this person is inspired to practice and, having full-fledged instructions, what should these people do? They should listen with great care. The aforementioned type is those endowed with roots of virtue, this [virtuous quality] is very rare! So for those who truly are gifted with roots of virtue, you are inspired to practice, you are able to differentiate right from wrong, as well as have no hindrances; then this is the time to practice well: by listening

to the most supreme and encompassing teachings.

[3B, 07.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P84 L7]

To listen to the teaching requires one more condition, what is it? “One-pointed attention”: to concentrate and strive hard at it. Often, when we listen with a careless attitude, there is not much use for it other than planting a virtuous root. As for the planting of virtuous roots, when will the usage arise? It will be incalculable eons later, after going around in a big circle. Eventually, the attainment will have to be after the sprouting of the seed. Therefore, upon hearing the teachings immediately followed by application, a superficial attitude will not work - it has to be focused! After listening attentively, what else is required - striving with effort! These two pre-conditions [leisure and opportunity & one-pointed attention] are required.

[3B, 08.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P84 L12]

Here [I] have to specify: [we may] say attainment will arise sooner or later, so I will take my time. Remember! Always remember this: taking your time does not mean slowly plant the seed and, when the time comes, [the attainment] will drop from the sky and make you an instant Buddha. There is no such thing! When the time comes, [you] still have to go through the process accordingly before [your] attainment. However, before your attainment, where are you circling - you are all but submerged in the three lower realms. Do keep this in mind! Since, eventually, you have to apply the practice properly; may I ask you why you would rather suffer so much before attaining it? Thus, with this understanding, certainly [we] would be focused and strive hard at it. Conversely, the reason you are able to do

so is due to your virtuous root!

[3B, 09.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P85 L4]

So the teaching tells us here that listening to these instructions is not easy at all! Now you have the opportunity to hear them, this is truly a person with virtuous root. You have accumulated many virtuous roots from past lives, now is the opportunity to advance, do strive hard on it! What should be the approach to strive - one-pointedly, strive hard! This is Lama Tsong-kha-pa's specific instruction to us at the end. Next, we will officially begin [to explain the text]. Now, what will we be talking about next?

[3B, 09.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P85 L8]

Here the teaching that I will explain is how fortunate beings are led to buddhahood by way of the stages of the path to enlightenment that (1) contain the key points of all of the Conqueror's scriptures, (2) are the pathways forged by two great trailblazers, Nagarjuna and Asanga,

Now, the instructions given here are the teachings of this text, which include all the key points of the encompassing teachings from Buddha, it is all-inclusive. And these encompassing key points pass through two branches: profound-view and extensive-deeds. One is the wisdom merits and the other is the blissful merits, respectively. Through the lineages of Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Manjusri, they then [respectively] passed down to Bodhisattvas Asanga and Vasubandhu, as well as Bodhisattvas Nagarjuna and Aryadeva, who later formed into these two great trailblazers. With these complete upholding [of the teachings]; the contents should be able to guide us to...

[3B, 10.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P85 L13]
(3) are the system for supreme beings progressing to the state of omniscience, and
(4) fully comprise all the stages practiced by the three types of persons.

This [Lamrim] teaching will guide us to the Buddha realm. The state of “omniscience” is the wisdom of Buddha, Buddha’s wisdom. The teachings lead us to the highest goal - the Buddha realm. That means all sufferings and problems are resolved and all blissful merits are perfected. Thus, the highest goal is this. Next, [this teaching] divides into three major sections; each one is named for a type of persons, namely the small, medium, and great scopes. These are the steps for advancement, just like our schools: elementary school, high school, and college. All of the contents: Tenets, Reasoning, Application, and Effect (教、理、行、果), are completely fulfilled. Within the encompassing instructions, if we express their contents in another way, they can be further divided into three aspects: first is the “essential quality,” its quality has to be pure without any flaws. [The second] What about the “quantitative measurement”? It has to be perfectly sufficient. [The third] What else? It requires “systematic order” [to be applied] without any disarray in the steps. In general, it is easier for us to understand the essence and quantitative measurement, while the systematic order is very easy to overlook. Let me use an example here.

[3B, 12.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P86 L10]
For example, if we are cooking: you will need

vegetables, rice, and so on. Yes, rice has to be rice. We [Chinese] have an expression: steam sand into rice. If you cook with sandy mud, it won't work. At this point, with proper rice and vegetables [prepared], what about the portion? By knowing how many people and portions, you can figure it out correctly. The sequence of events is equally important. Suppose you mixed it up, then it will not work. For instance, you take the vegetables: first you have to properly prepare them by washing them thoroughly, chopping them, and then cooking them in a pan. If you don't apply the proper sequence and, say, cook the vegetables before washing them, will it work? Absolutely not! Because [the vegetable] has various mud and pesticides, how can you wash them after cooking? Basically it will not be washable! By nature, eating vegetables is for your nutrition, but if you then take it with mud, how can you possibly eat it? Those pesticides not only won't provide nutrition, but they will poison you to death! Therefore, here [we] must have essential quality, quantitative measurement, and systematic order. Now, in this text all three aspects are included, thus it is complete. These are, well, the encompassing teachings to guide us on the path to ultimate enlightenment. Thus...

[此處截句有些次序上的不同]

[3B, 14.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P87 L5]

This is the path leading us to enlightenment.

[3B, 14.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P87 L7]

It is the training to guide those endowed with roots of virtue to the perfect Buddha realm that is referred herein. Next, it tells us another specific characteristic, for what reason? See below:

The scholars...Between these two renowned methods,

[此處截句有些次序上的不同]

[3B, 14.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P87 L10]

[Lama Tsong-kha-pa] explained that there are two lineages. Why did he mention this? Often in our general perception, we don't understand and pay no attention to the importance of the lineage. In fact, this is very important, very important. For example, for now if we casually engage in anything, say shopping, we will usually ask where is it made. This [car] is made in the USA, one is Ford and another is General Motors. Or it is made in Germany. As for the car, we just mentioned Ford and GM of the USA, and for Germany it is Mercedes Benz, and Japan has other [car companies], each has its origin. In fact, what does this origin imply? That refers to those engineers, outstanding talents, that's what it represents. Everything in the world has its native origin, including Buddhism, same with Buddhism! Therefore, we know, for whatever we are learning, if there is no accurate and encompassing origin, the learning will not be satisfactory. The same applies to Buddhism, Buddhism is the same! So, on one hand: Lama Tsong-kha-pa gave us the teachings. On the other hand, he showed us the origin of the brand [lineage]. Well, this brand has to be unmistakable!

[3B, 16.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P88 L8]

Thus, at Lama Tsong-kha-pa's time, there were two lineages that illustrated this [Lamrim] origin. Actually, this origin that we have just mentioned – the laudable instructions - rely on this lineage to pass down. The lineages are from Buddha, and then passed through the perfect tenets and accurate application by the great Teachers of the lineage. The great Teachers of the lineages relayed all of these. That is vital, very important! This is a point that we

specifically need to understand. So, which two lineages? Below, one is from Nalanda and the other is from Vikramasila. Let's take a look:

[3B, 16.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P88 L13]
The scholars of glorious Nalanda (Na-lendra) are said to have explained the teaching by way of three purities -- the purity of speech of the master, the purity of mind of the disciple, and the purity of the teaching that will be explained. At a later time the teaching spread to Vikramasila

The first one is Nalanda. It was the best region for studying Buddhism in ancient India. It was established soon after Buddha went into his nirvana and lasted until about CE 1000, when the invasion of Islamic powers completely destroyed Buddhism by its political force. Before then, India had always been the upholder of the Buddhism, the crown jewel of Buddha Dharma. There were many excellent Bodhisattvas and great teachers of the lineage. In order to compose a treatise to explain Buddha's teachings, there are three qualifications.

[3B, 17.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P89 L5]

In passing, [let's] mention this Nalanda. In Chinese history, there was a renowned Master Xuan-zang (玄奘大師). When he went to India, the best and the most extraordinary teachings were from Nalanda. [This status of Nalanda] was maintained before and after that era. Why mention this Nalanda? In other words, the essence of Buddha's teachings in all of India went through many great adepts' selection and preservation! The way they exhorted the sutra and commentary were with great care, there were three qualifications - the three purities (三門清淨). All three had to

be purified. The word “purity” is of key importance, very important! This purity means the Dharma teaching is absolutely, flawlessly accurate. If there is any speck of a flaw, our learning will be shifted from the path. Like eating, if you handle the food in a slightly unclean way, sorry, you will be poisoned to death by bacteria or poison. Applying Buddhism is the same; it is the same with the teachings. The worldly [misguidance] may only cause you minor harm. Whereas in Buddhism, any impurity that remains will produce serious consequences.

[3B, 19.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P89 L14]

Then what are the three qualifications? He [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] said that the first one is the teacher – the teacher’s purity of speech. That includes two parts: first is the Master, who is the Guru. For instance, the teacher-of-precepts and the teacher-of-Dharma; in other words, this teacher has to achieve self-purification as well as purity of his instruction. Why is it expressed in two different aspects? Could someone have personal purification yet the instruction that is taught is not purified? Yes, why? Of course, if he himself does not have attainment, the teaching taught will not be pure. Whereas with purified attainment, there is still a potential impurity issue that will be explained [below].

[3B, 20.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P90 L5]

Generally, we know that if one does not solve personal problems and tries to help others, this [helping others] is not possible. Thus, only when one’s [affliction] is tamed then it is considered purified. This purity has two requirements: the first requirement is to thoroughly understand the scriptural knowledge and reasoning, enhanced with the unmistakable attainment of experiential knowledge. Although [the teacher

may be] endowed with these qualities, while explaining, it could be a random public talk; the level of alignment [of the audience] may not be there. For instance: in our mundane world, well, there is a scholar here, we invited him to give a speech. To this scholar, [he could face] two possibilities: one is to present his expert knowledge in its entirety to us. Or maybe the audience - let's say that, today, this place has some children admiring this great scholar - for the sake of inspiring these children, the scholar gives a talk. May I ask, would it be appropriate for the scholar to talk about encompassing theory to the children? No! Therefore, these two requirements have to be complete. This is the "purity of speech of the teacher."

[3B, 21.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P90 L14]

There is also the "purity of the disciple's mental stream." To promulgate Dharma across this world requires not only teachers but also students, this should be very clear. Not only is this the case for Bodhisattvas and gurus, our Buddha was the same way. When Buddha was born, his disciples arrived [in this world] as well. For there has to be beings yearning to learn; to align with this condition, the encompassing Dharma was taught [by the Buddha]. Without this mutual alignment, even though Buddha attained perfect realization, he would not have the opportunity to share the teachings. This is the nature of Buddha! Didn't he clearly specify: my understanding of the Dharma is as much as the great earth, yet what I have taught is only like the dust particles on the tip of a fingernail. Generally speaking, prior to Buddha's teaching, there must be a conditional cause. Therefore, to spread the Dharma, other than the requirement of having a teacher, the condition of the student is also equally important. Just like in the above case, the scholar came to the kindergarten class with all the children;

pardon, the students' mind streams were not purified, [the scholar] can't provide complete teachings to us.

[3B, 22.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P91 L8]

Here, I can also use an example to explain it, a story. In Chinese history, there were [three] famous people:

Han-shan (寒山), Shi-de (拾得), and Zen master Feng-gan (豐干禪師). Of the three of them, one was [the manifestation of] Amitabha Buddha, one was [the manifestation of] Bodhisattva Manjusri (文殊菩薩), and [the third] was

Samantabhadra (普賢菩薩). What were the representations of Venerable Han-shan and Venerable Shi-de? Alas, one appeared as a shabby monk and the other was a poor beggar who seemingly knew nothing. Why did they appear under these conditions? Their appearance reflected the prevalence of Zen teachings at the time. What were the characteristics of Zen? The key point was to perceive one's true nature; in other words, emptiness. [The mind state of emptiness] detaches any Dharma; the universe (實際理地)

was untainted by even a speck of dust (一塵不染). So they had these appearances, what does it mean? As poor as not being able to find a spot to set the awl! (窮得身無立錐之地)

Normally, we call these [people] beggars for being so poor that they can't even afford a spot for the awl to stand on, their appearance was referred in this way. The reason they appeared like that is to align with the practitioners at the time, this we have to understand. Therefore, in order for Buddha's teachings to spread prosperously at our time, other than the teacher's [qualifications], the students should have compatible conditions [to learn].

[3B, 24.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P92 L2]

Upon acquiring the above qualifications, the third one is the purity of the teaching. Why should the teaching be purified? One reason, according to the Dharma, is that the teaching needs to be in accordance with the conditions of the time. What else? Among the Dharma, some align with lesser vehicle, some to greater vehicle; some to profound-view (性宗) and others to extensive-deeds (相宗). Even if it is great vehicle, the accordance is partial. I will apply the sutras as examples. Buddha taught so many - the Tripitaka and twelve branches of Buddhist canon (三藏十二部). For instance, the *Diamond Sutra* is described...well, as the highest vehicle, the highest one. [In addition, the] *Surangama Sutra*, generally we consider both to be the best of the best. However, why are they not considered as complete teachings (圓教)? It is because they focus on certain root-natures; certainly they are Mahayana. Although, as Mahayana, sorry, the lesser vehicle is left out [both Mahayana and lesser vehicle should complement each other]. And the beings of five human and deity realms [human, deity, sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva] not all of them are in accordance with [the totality of the teachings]. If we talk about profound-view, then extensive-deeds do not align with it [the profound view] and vice versa, this is the sign of incompleteness. Therefore, the third one, the perfect contents require special qualities. These three requirements have their specific conditions. Well. That was the Nalanda. Later the Kasmira, as we know "Vikramala" is Kasmira, as we know it was located in northwest India. Later, Buddhism was very prosperous over there. Next...

[3B, 25.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P92 L12]
is said that it was important for its scholars to begin with three topics.

Those great Bodhisattvas and teachers of the lineage specified that the above qualifications are fundamental. Besides these, there are other conditions. What did [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] say? The answer is in the following. At this point, we may be thinking: wow, wouldn't the late-comers be more brilliant than the ones who came earlier? We need to properly understand this concept - it does not mean the later group is more brilliant than the former group. Rather, it means that the later group [of teachers] will adapt better for the new [Buddhist generation], this is the basic concept. The real key point of all Dharma is alignment, which is the vital point. So, by the same token, at Nalanda's time, the three Dharma qualifications were to adapt all three conditions at their time that was the reason. Later, people's alignment changed, it slowly declined. Thus, from the periods of Buddha's actual teachings, to the semblance stage and then the degenerate stage (正法、像法、末法), the capacities of [the practitioners] become weaker. Thus, the required conditions became more and more rigorous; this is the difference [between the former and later practitioners]. Otherwise, we would again say: "Well! The latter is better!" [We] mistakenly judge right from wrong. Unknowingly, [we] formed the improper discretion. Then, what did [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] say next?

[3B, 27.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P93 L8]
The greatness of the author of the teaching, the greatness of the teaching, and how one should explain and listen to that teaching. Between these two renowned methods, here I will follow the latter in my

explanation.

This is divided into: first, the greatness of the author - that is, the purity of speech of the teacher. Second: the greatness of the teaching - how the teaching is flawless. What else? As for the composer, what does the composer include? It includes both the teacher and the student. Without these two, his “composition” is impossible, not possible. This is the first point. With these two inclusions: enhanced with great teachings, what is the additional [condition]? It is how to explain and how to listen to the teaching. This perception is very important, key importance! Later, when [we] cover the four parts [of the stages of the path to enlightenment], we will elaborate on it. Now I will clarify, clarify what? That is following the latter [Vikramalasila’s] approach, the latter approach. Now let’s take a break, a recess.

[3B, 28.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P94 L2]

Here, this text follows the latter’s approach, which is divided into four parts. It states:

[4A, 28.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P94 L3]

This explanation of the stages of the path to enlightenment has four parts:

[4A, 00.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P97 L2]

Now, I will use the latter [Vikramalasila] lineage as the basis to explain the method to practice the stages of the path to enlightenment. It has four parts:

[4A, 00.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P97 L3]

- 1. Showing the greatness of the teaching’s author in order to establish that it is of noble origin (chapter 1)**
- 2. Showing the greatness of the teaching in order to engender respect for the instructions (chapter 2)**

3. How to listen to and explain the teachings (chapter 3)

4. How to lead students with the actual instructions (chapter 4 and on)

There are four parts. So why does it have to be divided into four? The reasons are briefly explained below. The detailed meaning of each part is stated here. As long as we study sincerely on the following topics, then the subtle details can be understood. In the beginning, I will explain the principles. First, we understand that whatever we learn, we must learn from someone who has proper experiential knowledge, this is the right way to learn. For any worldly or spiritual learning, in order for you to master it, [you] have to follow someone who has already acquired the skills. Among these skilled people, those endowed with more brilliant intentions and encompassing insight are superior. This is how the worldly way works, to say nothing of the Buddha's teachings! For any flaw in the worldly engagement, the most you can say is, "well, doing business for less profit or losing some money [which is acceptable]." Taking the wrong turn in learning Buddha Dharma will strand [us] in cyclic existence; the least of this is the suffering of rebirth; more is being submerged in the three miserable realms, very dreadful! Especially when studying Buddha's teachings, your careless slacking will bring tremendous negative effects, major negative impact, this is what we need to be aware of! Thus, the source of the purity of the teachings is absolutely important. So to attain the purified encompassing teachings, the qualities of the guidance are determining factors.

[4A, 02.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P98 L8]

However, here, a lot of people may say, "Well, the one who

guides us is the encompassing Buddha, why do we need you [the author] to compose the text, and for him to translate [from Tibetan to another language]? Are you better than Buddha?” Nowadays, many ask such a question, which is seemingly right; we may think it to be right! Thus, too many people are saying, “Well, you don’t need to read the commentary, could it be the composing Bodhisattva is better than Buddha?” Upon hearing this we agree, and then you forsake studying the commentary. Here lies a big problem - we will explain it now.

[4A, 03.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P98 L13]

The Dharma taught by Buddha and the content of his inner realization have two major differences [scriptural knowledge and experiential knowledge], which we need to recognize. His inner realization is perfectly complete, absolutely so. As for the inner realization, no one can surpass Buddha - not Bodhisattvas, not teachers of the lineage! [Buddha’s] Dharma teachings have a special characteristic – exhorting beings of various levels of capacities. For children, he explains teaching at their level. For adults, the Dharma taught is for adults. As for two thousand years ago, the teachings were for people at that period of time; for contemporary people, the teachings are different from then. Buddha is fully encompassed, yet would you be able to align with his teachings toward various levels of capacities? Not necessarily, this is one angle. Not only is there a great distance in time and space, in this circumstance, questions may arise within.

[4A, 04.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P99 L5]

Theoretically, we should understand the above, while, practically, we should also have a look at it: yes, the Buddha’s teachings are definitely complete in their totality.

This is absolutely true! Because of their perfect completeness in teaching, his direct audiences were also completely capable [of understanding the teachings]. Thus, whatever he taught in each scripture, after the key audience heard the session: for Mahayana practitioners, many certainly attained the level of certitude-about-the-teaching [v2 chapter 12 p.151], or at least they generated the spirit of enlightenment. As for Hinayana practitioners, they attained the clairvoyance of pure-Dharma-vision and achieved arhatship. This effect is due to the genuine integrity of Buddha's qualities. What does this mean? Those key audience members received these benefits, what about those not quite being in accordant yet? Sorry, there is a saying, "Teaching Dharma to those who do not align with the teachings is equal to idle talk." (佛法不應機，等同閒言語) For lack of accordant is the same as empty talk. Now, unfortunately we lack accordant, you [as part of we] may not achieve benefits while reading. Even though you consider reading with conviction or having faith is one thing, upon reading for half a day, if you lack the root-nature of being a Mahayana, may [I] ask: are you attaining the certitude-about-the-teaching? Do you have the aspiration for spirit of enlightenment? For the Hinayana, to say nothing of the level of arhatship, have you attained the pure-Dharma-vision? No! Then what does it mean? Here is the key issue! This is how true it is, we should understand.

[4A, 05.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P99 L14]

Besides, for the sake of aligning with various root-natures, one scripture taught a given Dharma approach, another taught a different one - these Dharma approaches are part of the entire progress and each one contains one key point. For example, the *Diamond Sutra* is about emptiness, it provides antidotes for those "with

attachment,” such is the perception [introduced in *Diamond Sutra*]. Different scriptures present it differently. If we lack proper understanding, upon learning, what will happen [to us] - partial understanding. This partial understanding on the path of advancement is very serious, it is a great flaw! If you do not recognize it, you take it for granted - sure, sure, sure! Thus, it is required to rely on this encompassing teaching lineage to exhort the contents, and then you will be able to realize “Oh, that is how it works!” Your self-taught reading is very likely partial understanding, while, upon [hearing] proper explanation, you can apply it accordingly! What will it take to transform from “partial understanding” to “proper application”? [We must] rely on the one who guides us, we must understand in this way. From the aforementioned, we must understand [accordingly]...well, well! [The teachers and teachings should be endowed] with these characteristics, and special attributes. Otherwise, we won't be able to avoid misunderstanding, which leads to great loss of benefits! So he says here, the greatness of the author of this teaching. Especially for this complete teaching, in the future you will understand the greatness referred to here: up to what level of greatness and why the teaching is so great! To us this is a very important fundamental understanding!

[4A, 07.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P100 L12]

Moreover, while we are inspired to practice, there is a requisite attribute, for we are ordinary beings. In the case that we attained our Buddhahood, we are not just practicing for ourselves, we teach others, as we are only ordinary beings who realize suffering and engage in studying the teachings [to eliminate suffering]. Thus, as a matter of fact, although [we] the learner should have the capability to distinguish [true suffering from true happiness], yet this capability is not strong enough. So what should we rely on

at this juncture? Rely on those worldly high achievers, or those in our [Dharma] circle; throughout the trial of time and space, and throughout proper discretion, [we] affirm the worthiness - that is the standard of our measurement [of suffering and happiness]. By nature, this process of learning is not perfect, but, for us, the alternative option is not available. For instance, hiring someone, everyone recommended this person is good, and you agreed. But the comments from those people are of two types: positive recommendations are from nonvirtuous people, this is not reliable; the other type is recommendations from virtuous people, this is more reliable. Among those virtuous people, there are recommendations from wise people who are in accord with wisdom, while those with blissful merits' recommendations will align with blissfulness. This is an important criterion for us to rely on virtuous teacher.

[4A, 08.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P101 L7]

So here, [the author] he pointed out this characteristic below. Although we cannot understand the original intent of Buddha's teaching now, [we] lack the capacity to distinguish between virtuous and non-virtuous, but we are equipped with worldly common knowledge [of basic capability of discretion]. Thus, he used this common knowledge as a basis to tell us, "Well, yes, yes, yes! This is the right approach [to learn Buddha Dharma]!" From this, you are inspired to pay reverence wholeheartedly with yearning to learn - you then are on the right track. Upon acquiring this standard measurement, the accord of what to cast aside and what to adopt will be appropriate.

[4A, 09.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P101 L11]

Thus, what should the first step be? To study; there is a crucial point to apply Buddha's teaching, what is it -

veneration. Normally, our greatest obstacle is to say, “Alas, I have great karmic obstacles!” What is the center of karma? “I.” The characteristic of this “I” is arrogance; once you have the arrogant attitude, the consideration of “I” is always the best. Often, when we chat with others, [we have] the perception that the self is always right. Because you have your own view, that is the obstacle blocking other people’s perceptions to enter. Suppose you discern the superiority of others opinion – when he tells you the right method, at the same time you will lower your arrogant attitude. There is a great remedy for arrogance - reverence; this is [the appropriate fix].

[4A, 10.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P102 L2]

Next, [the author] said for the second step: ah, not only is the author of this teaching great, but the teaching is great as well, “oh, how wonderful!” You will then look at it wholeheartedly and develop respect from the depths of your heart. That is when you are able to officially step on the path of learning the teaching. That is why he had to show the greatness of the teaching before he formally explains it to inspire our reverence towards the teaching. The major reason why we are often ignorant is due to a lack of respect. Once you pay respect, one aspect is that veneration is the greatest motivator, and the obstacle will be reduced. At same time, the previously accumulated karmic obstructions will also be eliminated. This is a very important reason!

[4A, 10.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P102 L8]

Thus, well, this highly achieved author that composed the text that expounded such laudable teachings. Next, there is another reasoning - with regard to this great teaching, how to listen and explain. Upon understanding these conditions, you will then align with them; otherwise the accordance is not there yet. As for the third point [how to

listen to and explain the teachings], it is often neglected, but in fact it is extremely important, extremely important! The details will be covered when [we] discuss the third point later [in vol.1 chapter 3]; by then, [you] will gradually understand it clearly, it will be very clear.

[4A, 11.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P102 L13]

Let me apply a simple example here to illustrate: suppose we have to go somewhere - of course we are planning to advance from ordinary being to Buddha realm; all of this requires spiritual and philosophical experiences – now we apply an immediately tangible case as an example. For instance, I am going toward the south. You may go on foot, which does not require [too much] preparation, just stand up and walk, right! As long as you know the way, people show you how to get there, that's it. In other words, someone with experience tells you how to get there, and then guides you in the right direction, that is unmistakable. These **three** [guidance: direction and method] should be sufficient; you do not need other preparation.

[4A, 12.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P103 P5]

The next [example] is the bicycle, [I'm] sorry to say that preparation is required with the bicycle. To ride on a bicycle [for the trip], the brakes need to be checked and the chain, which has not been used for a long time, needs to be greased, and some other parts require preparation. If [you travel] by driving a car, the preparation is more: what was mentioned before and the coolant for the engine, the engine oil, the gasoline, and proper tire pressure; you need to have them all prepared properly! By taking a flight, that takes more serious requirements, if there is no proper preparation, you might as well not take the trip, otherwise defects may occur when taking off - that may be a matter of life and

death. Although someone already told you how to get there and clearly showed you the route, if you are not well prepared, then trouble is bound to happen! This is a fact of life!

[4A, 13.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P103 L12]

PROLOGUE OUTLINE

Pay homage to the good qualities of Buddha's body, speech and mind:

Homage to the guru **Manjughosa**.

I bow my head to the chief of the **Sakyas**,

Whose **body** was formed by ten million perfect virtues,

Whose **speech** fulfills the hopes of limitless beings,

Whose **mind** sees precisely all objects of knowledge.

Venerate great teachers of 2 trailblazers:

I bow down to **Ajita** [Maitreya] (**extensive deeds**) and to **Manjughosa** (**profound view**),

The supreme heirs of the unequalled teacher [the Buddha].

Having assumed the burden of all the conqueror's deeds,

They emanate in innumerable buddha-realms.

Venerate great teachers:

I bow to the feet of **Nagarjuna** (**profound view**) and **Asanga** (**extensive deeds**),

Thoroughly renowned throughout the three levels,

Ornaments of **Jambudvipa'**

who wrote exact commentaries on the intent of the **Mother of Conquerors**, so difficult to fathom.

Venerate Atisha who compiled the corpus of Lamrim chenmo - "Lamp for the path to Enlightenment":

I bow to **Dipamkara** [Atisha], bearer of the treasury of instructions

That comprise the key points, unmistakable and complete,

Of the paths of the profound view and vast deeds,

Transmitted well from those two great trailblazers.

Venerate teachers of the lineage:

I bow with respect to the teachers

Who, with deeds of skill in means moved by loving concern,

Illuminate for the fortunate – the gateway leading to liberation,

The eye for viewing – all the limitless scriptures.

Lama Tsongkhapa's core reasoning to compile this text:

Nowadays those making effort at yoga – have studied few [of the classic texts],

While those who have studied much – are not skilled in the key points of practice.

They tend to view the scriptures through the eyes of partisanship,

Unable to use reason to discriminate the meaning of the scriptures.

Therefore, having seen that they lack the path pleasing to the wise,

The supreme complete instructions, the key points of the teaching,

I was inspired to explain

This path of the great trailblazers.

Aspired to hear/study this great teaching:

All those fortunate ones who are unobscured by the darkness of partisanship,

Who have the mental capacity to differentiate good and bad,

And who wish to make meaningful this good life of leisure

Should listen with one-pointed attention.

The scholars of glorious **Nalanda** (Na-lendra) are said to have explained the teaching by way of three purities –

- the purity of speech of the master,
- the purity of mind of the disciple, and
- the purity of the teaching that will be explained.

At a later time the teaching spread to **Vikramasila**, it is said that it was important for its scholars to begin with three topics –

- the greatness of the author of the teaching,
- the greatness of the teaching, and
- how one should explain and listen to that teaching.

CHAPTER 1 : ATISHA

English LR V.1 p.35

[4A, 13.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 103 L12]

So now, many of us are inspired to Buddhism and the encompassing teachings are available, my current experience is the third point [how to listen to and explain the teachings]. Therefore, regarding the true intent of the third point, gradually you will be at ease with more understanding of why it is so important - very important, too important! Upon the aforementioned preparation, that will be the time to begin the explanation on how to lead students with the actual instructions. This is the reason it is divided into four parts. Now, we will continue, let's go over the text:

[4A, 13.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 104 L1]

I. Showing the greatness of the teaching's author in order to establish that it is of noble origin

The first is the greatness of the author of the teaching, the text says:

[4A, 13.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 104 L3]

These instructions, in general, are those of the *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*, composed by the venerable Maitreya. In particular, the text for this work is *Atisha's Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*;

Overall, what is the key point in this text - it is [based on] *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*. The *Ornament for Clear Knowledge* was composed by Venerable Maitreya, that is, Bodhisattva Maitreya. [We] should know that after Buddha went into his nirvana, he turned over all of his responsibilities to our Maitreya Bodhisattva [next Buddha to come]. Thus, [Maitreya] is the most perfect and precise guidance at our present time, that is him. Of course, the author perfected himself, and then he composed this text

[*Ornament for Clear Knowledge*]. So, what is *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*? I will introduce it briefly: it contains eight divisions. Specifically: the first is “three wisdoms.” What are the “three wisdoms” [three fold of knowledge] - Sravaka and pratyekabuddha knowledge [wisdom of emptiness], Bodhisattva-knowledge [perfection of wisdom] and Buddha-knowledge [omniscience]. The second is called “four performances” and is followed by “one fruit [Dharmakaya]” – Buddhahood.

[*Note: Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* → Maitreya’s *Ornament for Clear Knowledge* → Atisha’s *Lamp for the path to enlightenment* → Lama Tsong-kha-pa’s *The great treatise on the stages of the path to enlightenment*

3 wisdoms or known as threefold-knowledge:

1. Sravakas and pratyekabuddha knowledge/wisdom of emptiness
or known as base-knowledge
2. Bodhisattva-knowledge/perfection of wisdom
or known as path-knowledge
3. Buddha-knowledge/omniscience
or known as knowledge-of-all-aspects]

[4A, 14.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 104 L11]

In other words, the aforementioned says that we should recognize the arising condition. In the condition faced by us ordinary beings, based on our ignorance and erroneous perception, [we] accumulate various karmas. Now we understand why [we] have such contaminated suffering in cyclic existence. That is due to lack of recognition of the arising condition; it is not the fault of external object, but our mistaken perception in perceiving the object. So, in fact, this is what we should realize. Therefore, to understand this stated “wisdom” - sravaka and pratyekabuddha knowledge

[wisdom of emptiness], is to know the true nature of all phenomena, which is emptiness. Then, Bodhisattva-knowledge [perfection of wisdom] means to fully discriminate all phenomena. And the Buddha-knowledge [omniscience] is the wisdom of all knowing. Upon perfecting all three [wisdoms], Buddhahood is achieved. In order to have this attainment of these qualifications, [the proper application is to] practice the four in a systematic sequence, which is known as the four-performances. Upon progressing on this course, the final accomplishment is Buddhahood [one fruit].

[Note: 4 performances or known as four applications:

- 1. 圓滿眾相加行: complete application of all aspects**
- 2. 頂加行: culminating application**
- 3. 漸次加行: progressive application**
- 4. 剎那現證菩提加行: instantaneous application]**

[4A, 16.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 105 L5]

Although it sounds very simple, in fact this has all of the essential points to achieve ultimate Buddhahood as an ordinary being. Imagine the importance of this text! Yes, we may not be able to study it all at the present stage, but we need to know the entire framework. Why? Because this is our ultimate goal! With this ultimate goal in your mind, to recognize these essential points then begin to tread the path you should be on. What required are the steps you ought to be taking, but this step in front of you has to be in the right direction. On the entire path, if your direction is correct, then with every single step, one after another, you will reach the

end - perfect completion. Thus, prior to taking this step, you should clearly recognize the entire map of the trip. Upon taking off, this will be the most complete and direct path, this should be very clear!

[4A, 17.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 105 L12]

I will still use an example. Say we are going to the south, toward the south. Like what was stated earlier: by walking, biking, driving, these are the tools, which should be fine. As for the route, there are several variations. However, you definitely will not say this at the beginning: “Nothing matters as long as I get started.” Well, this is incorrect. You have to know which route you will take from here toward the south to make [the trip] work. Once you started, and then make the decision - we get out the door, and then the roads lead to all directions, how on earth do you get started? How can things work out like this!

[4A, 17.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 106 L2]

Most of us make this same mistake, with this mentality: “Oh well! I don’t care, as long as [I] just chant Buddha’s name or just meditate!” In fact, there is a great open issue here, great issue here! For your goal, suppose we talk about your goal, what is the purpose of your goal? Mine is to recite the four syllables, then little matters as long as you [know] “Amitabha”, whether rebirth [to Pure Land] will occur or not. As for now, if departure from this life is about to happen, very sorry! You have to evaluate, is four syllables better or is six syllables [Nan-mo Amitabha] better? There are also other preparatory and actual sessions [for practice]! Actually, our goal is not going to another rebirth, it is to become a Buddha, for the sake of achieving Buddhahood! Therefore, the most direct approach to depart this life now is

chanting Buddha's name. So it has to be: you are planning to head southbound. In order to stick to this intention, from the present perspective this is the [chosen] approach. Is this clear, understand? Right!

[4A, 18.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 106 L10]

At this juncture, I will use another example: of course for now our going south is very convenient, whereas achieving Buddhahood is not that simple! Let's put it in another way, take going to America as the example. If someone says go to America, where is America? On second thought: oh, America is to our east. Would this be a sufficient [direction]? Excuse me; this is absolutely not enough [information]! Suppose America is in the east, then I walk out and continue toward the east, will [I] be able to get there? I guarantee that you won't make it there! Then, you walk out the door, which it is facing west, and you want to head east. [If] you move forward to the west, isn't it the wrong direction? [If] you walk east and bump into a wall, how can you go further? It's not going to work. Therefore, no matter where you are going, there should be a complete order of the proper approach - the solution for winding and turning [roads]. Even if you start with proper planning, you walk toward the east and take one more step from the edge, sorry, [that is] the Pacific Ocean. That is a dead end; this is very obvious!

[4A, 19.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 107 L2]

Thus, no matter where you are going, as long as you clearly recognize the destination prior to the trip and then begin to approach it - take the immediate steps properly [one by one]. Whether it is chanting Buddha's name or Zen

meditation, they are our immediate steps to begin - the steps we must take - of course these are the appropriate steps! However, don't ever say, "I will take this path and forsake all other [paths]!" This is in reference to the earlier example [in the previous paragraph]. So we should not say, "Alas, why bother to study this [Lamrim]?" This can be a very big obstacle. So the author mentioned before, "All those fortunate ones who are unobscured by the darkness of partisanship" - those who are endowed with virtuous roots! By the same token, why is that some people can achieve [liberation] in one life and others must wander through three countless eons? This is true even for arhats. Similarly, some people go to a fortunate rebirth, some are reborn into an unfortunate rebirth, some are reborn in a border region, some chant for a while but are still not able to be reborn [to Pure Land]. Where did it go wrong? [The key concept] is right here [set proper direction and achieve it by applying proper methods]. This is what we should recognize in the very beginning, they should be identified.

[4A, 20.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 107 L11]

Because I once encountered this very interesting case, someone said, "Dharma Master, alas, it is important to chant Buddha's name now, why do you talk about this [Lamrim teachings]? I need to quickly meditate and undertake a seven-day retreat of intensive meditation to attain enlightenment!" I was very impressed and said, "Well, you undertook a retreat of intensive meditation. May I ask you - after chanting Buddha's name for seven days, have you attained enlightenment?" He thought for a long time. No! [Was I] right? [He] thought about it carefully, and replied, "Not only did I do one seven-day retreat; I have done so many seven-day retreats but still have no sign of attainment." Nowadays, there are too many people like this.

Furthermore, their chanting is incorrect but they try to advise others, “Well, you don’t need to worry about it [repeatedly attending retreat with no advancement].” Thus, one seven-day retreat is rewardless, ten seven-day retreats are rewardless, and one hundred of them are rewardless. Honestly, I have experienced such a painful process. Ah, everyone chanted so hard in the retreat! Later I realized, our true intention is to study Buddhism, unfortunately we applied the teachings erroneously. What are [we] learning? [We are] learning from this me [the self]. Let me explain to clarify.

[4A, 21.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 108 L4]

I will give an example first. When I read Venerable Tan-xu’s *Shade Dust Memoirs*, the elder mentioned three phrases - See through! Let go! Set free! Ah, how wonderful! What are the worldly entanglements? Those that you cannot see through, once you discern it, you will let go; once you let go, the bondage is gone. Wow, what a wonderful feeling! Indeed, everybody recognizes these six words by glancing at them, and felt that I got it right. Unfortunately, it is wrong! How so? I will further explain it. Now we understand “see through,” these two words, as long as you attended elementary school [you will understand]. If attended high school or college, the level of understanding is more. Why? For the higher level, your advanced understanding of these two words will have more in-depth implications, correct?

[4A, 22.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 108 L11]

Until now, what is our understanding of the content of “see through”? To see through our world, the mundane disputes - with this discernment, your worldly argument will be lessened. Have you discerned the dispute in cyclic existence? Have you seen through it? These two words did

not reveal your seeing through it, the usage of these two words did not reveal it to you! Thus, [we] often engage in the worldly hustle bustle, alas, marrying off the daughter, the son needs a wife, stock price is raising, and these sorts of things - wow, awfully busy! Upon hearing this “see through,” well, great, break through with discernment. As for true discernment - you may still be measured by the worldly standard, although you see through the aforementioned things - but for Buddha’s teachings, you are still not compliant. You take it for granted that you got it, thus you let go, [what] you let go is the stock, just one small portion [or] worry a little less about the children, but the attachment is still within the mind.

[4A, 23.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 109 L4]

The above cases are considered not bad, but [if you are] trying to escape from cyclic existence, will that happen? The study we are referring to often is to study this [how to escape from cyclic existence]. In this case, [we] are still trapped in this “egoism.” As a result, the more you study, the more complacent you become and this “ego” becomes bigger. After all the efforts, pardon [me] how can you escape from cyclic existence? Too many people have made this mistake, always feeling: well, I got it, let’s go for it! A very obvious Dharma entrance of “ten thousand people cultivate it; ten thousand people will have attainment.” Unfortunately, the reason why there are so many people who chanted for a long time but still have not attained it, this is the flawed perception. Moreover, [they] think, “Alas, I have to practice quickly in seven days!” Yes! [If after] seven days in the retreat, you truly see the Buddha, of course the best teachings is there [for you]. We have to carefully apply this self-evaluation!

[4A, 24.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 109 L11]

If we have a perfect understanding of another path, if your initial step is right, every subsequent step will be correct; every step is a correct one. The Great Teachers have taught us, for instance, the approach of chanting Buddha's name - Venerable Han-shan Master explained it very clearly. Not only him, but many other Great Teachers made same [comment]. Nowadays, those chanting Buddha's name [still] become flustered at the final moment of this life. In fact, they do not recognize the meaning of chanting Buddha's name, just continuously mumble Buddha's name while the causes of cyclic existence are constantly growing. When the final moment arrives, the only tiding is the karmic force of cyclic existence, no sign [of escaping cyclic existence] at all! Those who truly know how to chant Buddha's name moment by moment sever the root of cyclic existence. With each brutal severance [of the root of cyclic existence], [the attainment] should be revealed prior to the final moment [of this life], for you are very clear when chanting each [name] - the function of chanting each Buddha's name is to accumulate purified merits. Of course, as long as you have enough accumulation, when the final moment comes, [you] will go for the rebirth at ease!

[4A, 24.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 110 L4]

How do you recognize it? Well, this teaching is all encompassing, just that simple! All you have to do is sincerely study the Lamrim teaching and, before long, [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] will tell us: Oh, how to properly chant [toward the goal of attainment], and what kind of chanting is wrong. With this understanding, then your chanting will definitely become as secure as "ten thousand people

cultivate and ten thousand people will attain"! Once you have [accumulated] enough merits, you plan to advance to a higher status with this in mind: well, not only do I want to be reborn in a border region or to an unfortunate rebirth and then to a fortunate rebirth - all rely on this [aspiration of Mahayana sincerity to help needy sentient beings everywhere]. [This rebirth is] not just the "Land of Common Residence of Beings and Saints" [see introduction 1B note], I may even be able to be reborn into the "Land of Real Reward", the cause still lies in the [Lamrim teachings]! So I just bring it up [for your attention] here.

[4A, 25.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 110 L10]

So this is the general outline of the *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*, what about this specific teaching? It is referred to as the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, which was composed by Honorable Elder Atisha.

English LR v.1 p.36

[4A, 25.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 110 L12]

hence, the very author of the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* is also the author of this [work].

So the honorable person who composed the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* is also the author of this [Lamrim], for [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] followed the key points [of Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*]. In other words, *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* was the blue print for [Lamrim], Lama Tsongkhapa's Lamrim blueprint. Actually Lama Tsong-kha-pa's Lamrim content is the complete lineage passed down from Atisha. The lineage of

Venerable Atisha, after several generations [302 years], finally passed to Lama Tsong-kha-pa. He is the recipient of the entire lineage from Atisha; this is what actually happened.

[4A, 26.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 111 L3]

There is one more point to mention specifically. Regarding to this teaching, as far as accommodate to our capacity, Lamrim is far more appropriate than the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. This was stated earlier, which does not mean it is better than the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Not so, Lamrim matches more to our capacities. [We have to] clearly understand this point, this is what [we should know]. Thus, for us who are learning this now, you might as well read both works. If you read the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, you may not have a clue after reading it for a while. Whereas if you read Lamrim, all the questions related to practice will be solved - you are used to chanting the Buddha's name and you will succeed in the corresponding attainment; for Zen meditation, the achievement will arise; [for those] studying the tenets, the achievement will arise [as well]. I just bring it up here. So who is the composer [of this text]?

[4A, 27.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P111 L9]

The other name by which the great master Dipamkasrijnana is widely renowned is the glorious Atisha.

“The great master Dipamkasrijnana” is his translated name, so his “other name” is Atisha. Atisha is an honorable title for Tibetan - when translated to Chinese, it means “surpassing and beyond superb.” For instance, we will call the utmost special person as master so-and-so, great teacher so-and-so, etc. As for this great master Atisha,

Tibetans usually called him by this name [Atisha]. This is to represent the most honorable, the most respectful title towards him. And now his greatness is shown in several aspects:

[4A, 27.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 111 L14]

Showing the greatness of the teaching's author in three parts:

- A. How he took rebirth in an excellent lineage**
- B. How upon that basis he gained good qualities**
- C. Having gained those good qualities, what Atisha did to further the teachings**

English LR V.1 p.36

- A. How he took rebirth in an excellent lineage**

[4B, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 113 L2]

There are three parts. The first is his origin, which is described as “excellent lineage” - his family background, etc. - this is the first part. Second, the good qualities he has attained; in other words, the second is to benefit oneself. This self-benefit is further divided into two parts: scriptural and experiential, etc., [or] experiential knowledge and scriptural knowledge. Upon these attainments, all the activities [he engaged in] afterward are purely for the benefit of others [this is the third one]. In these three parts, the latter two are easier to understand; that is, benefiting self and others. The first part is “how he took rebirth in an excellent lineage.” This requires some explanation. We usually have a saying, “heroes are not regarded for their humble origins,” so on and so forth. Meaning, a true hero is one regardless

of his origins. So now here it involves his origin again, it talks about his perfect rebirth. Why does it matter? It really matters, it really matters! For we often say, “heroes are not regarded for their humble origins,” which is considered as the worldly standard. The worldly standard only considers the immediate effects. In other words, this person exists in this world and produces worldly functions. Well, this person who created a current leading trend is a great hero! [The worldly standard] is only limited to this view and forsakes all the other factors. Buddha Dharma taught [us] the three-lifetime cause and effect, and these three lifetimes are from the beginningless past - the immeasurable and boundless past - all the way until complete attainment. This length of time is measureless and boundless.

**[4B, 01.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 114
L4]**

We also understand that the practice of Mahayana will definitely not be achieved within a short period of time, even though the *Array of Stalks Sutra* says, “The Youthful Sudhana, with ten perfect grades of Bodhisattva faith, attained enlightenment in one lifetime.” Yet, for an ordinary being to achieve this [ten grades of Bodhisattva faith] level takes a very long period of time! Thus, the earlier practices planted the causes to fulfill the effect in the present. Therefore, the more complete [the causes planted earlier], the more fulfillment of the effects that will arise in this life. So where does this fulfillment begin? It arises from the origin of birth. We have to understand this point. So in Buddhism there are many great teachers, many masters; although they are masters, their hierarchical precedence relies on their karmic tendency from previous lives. For those who are at a higher order, their origin is more fulfilled; the ones who attained a lower order is not the same, it depends on which

tendency he is inclined toward. However, there is one exception; the ultimate Bodhisattva does not count. The so-called ultimate Bodhisattva, he is already a Buddha, he just manifests to accommodate to our capacities. So he does not reveal himself ...only partially, only revealing a certain aspect. Regarding this point, this manifestation may not be a complete teaching, but this is not what we are going to discuss now.

[4B, 02.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 114 L13]

So for an encompassing teaching, it must be endowed with such perfection. This perfection begins from his family origin; his origin was in such a way that, thus, it showed his completeness of blissful merits. Secondly, he had to possess sublime wisdom, perfect conventional wisdom. Then, perfect conventional and ultimate wisdom; ultimate wisdom includes becoming a monastic. After ordination, theoretically, there are two majors in Buddhism: scriptural knowledge and experiential knowledge. Scriptural knowledge is the reasoning, showing why you need to practice, what to practice, and how to practice; upon understanding these, you apply it accordingly for direct experience to achieve both scriptural knowledge and experiential knowledge. This is for the self-benefiting part - once you have this understanding, the next part is to benefit others. Hence, a genuine, encompassing teaching must include these three attributes [perfect origin of birth, perfect wisdom, and benefit self and others]; this is what we [should] know. Therefore, I briefly explained it here. As for the text itself, it is relative easy to understand, I will not go over it in detail, I won't explain it in detail. So you should review the text closely at least once.

[4B, 03.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 115 L6]

Also, if you all are really inspired by Venerable Atisha, I will introduce you to a book - *The Biography of Venerable Atisha*, it is available in the Buddhist bookstore. In fact, for serious reading, there is another book, *The Biography of Lama Tsong-kha-pa*. The Buddhist bookstore has now published a book named *The Collection of Lama Tsong-kha-pa's Life Stories* [composed by a Chinese monk], that used vernacular Chinese [compared to classical Chinese literature style] to describe the biography of Lama Tsong-kha-pa. As the actual author who composed this text is Lama Tsong-kha-pa, [if] you can read *The Biography of Venerable Atisha* and *The Biography of Lama Tsong-kha-pa*, go over both of them, and then you will know: Ah, these authors are exceedingly great! So the two of them, one from India, one from Tibet, were recognized at their times as well as hundreds years later as "Shakyamuni the second." [Also, they] were called, "Ah, they are the manifestation of Buddha, truly the manifestation of Buddha!" I will not go into detail, but one thing I need to clarify here, [the intention is] to inspire our respect towards these two great Masters.

[4B, 05.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 115 L14]

This Venerable Atisha, he was born as a prince to a kingdom, and it was a great kingdom, a great kingdom in eastern India. Eastern India is equivalent to the present Bangladesh - that is, east of Pakistan. It was a large country at that time in India. And he was a prince - he was the second son. In fact, there is a special meaning here in every aspect, as the second son represents the order - it has a special implication, [I] will not go into detail here. He was extremely intelligent since he was young, what does this indicate? It shows that both his blissful merits and his wisdom merits were completely fulfilled. Not only was he

extremely intelligent, but he also yearned to be ordained at a very early age. Well, this is not an ordinary being! Upon ordination - [actually,] prior to ordination - he already came into extensive contact with the mundane and supramundane knowledge. [He had] learned thoroughly all the knowledge of the mundane world before his teenage years, [became] all knowing, just like our Shakyamuni Buddha - mastering all worldly knowledge.

[4B, 06.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 116 L7]

Here, I will share a typical story. There was one time he barely...it also mentioned in this text that at age fifteen, only fifteen! He once went to hear *Buddhism Logic* - this is related to the science of logic. This science of logic is similar to the science of reasoning in our current time; it is not easy to learn. I believe for many of us, who have encountered Buddhism, many knew that this science of logic is very difficult to learn. It makes us still confused after years of studying, unable to clarify its contents. Yet this Great Teacher went to hear [a teaching about it] for one session, let us think, what can be learned in one session, what was the outcome at the end? [I] might as well tell this story here.

[4B, 06.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 116 L13]

At that time, in India's customs, the non-Buddhists and Buddhists often debated and there was a complete set of proper methods for debating; it was unlike our bickering now where everyone talks nonsense. It was not like that. Since it was with a complete method in accordance with logic, everyone debated skillfully and there were arbitrators on the side. The arbitrators were kings, elders, those with prominent reputations; thus, it was not handled recklessly. As for the defeated party, there were two [outcomes]: [one

was,] I convinced you, then, after that - if I were a [non-Buddhist] priest and you were a Buddhist - I lost, then I had to completely de-robe, [including] the cap of the priest, replace them with monk's robes and become your [the winner's] disciple. Also, [the loser had to] offer the priest's temple to worship Buddha - the same happens if [the outcome] was the other way around. This is really serious! Otherwise, [the 2nd outcome] was that my head would be yours, so it was like that!

[4B, 07.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 117 L5]

What happened was, Venerable Atisha followed this teacher who was an extraordinary Master in Buddhism, [and this Master] was debating with a non-Buddhist. After several sessions of debate, it was hard to come out even. Later, there was another great debate but, unfortunately, prior to the debate, this teacher fell sick. Since the debate requires full attention, in the case of any fatigue in the mind, sorry but any careless loophole would lose the debate! Therefore, this teacher was not feeling well, so he refrained from attending [the debate]. Thus, a substitute was needed, but no one dared, [all were] afraid to handle this debate. Because, in the case of being defeated in the debate, all the Buddhist temples, well, well, would be completely moved out and then replaced by moving in all the statues of non-Buddhists. The monks would have to take off their robes and follow the opponent, how could this be possible! Thus, under normal circumstances, of course calling in sick should be fine, but people would say, "Look at him; he could not win the debate, so he pretended to be sick!" This external situation was dreadful! Alas, everyone felt extremely uneasy!

[4B, 08.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 117 L14]

So, Venerable Atisha, upon hearing one session, he was extremely intelligent, this teacher also thought that he would be competent. Everyone thought, “Well, this person is really brilliant, why not check with him?” Surprisingly, he said... When he was approached, “You go for the debate.” “Sure!” If it were us, imagine how that could be possible! Well, he went. Not only that, but he debated and won in the first round! You could imagine how absolutely intelligent [he was]! He went through several great critical debates like this and completely vanquished all non-Buddhists; you can imagine the knowledge and experience of this person [Atisha]. How old was he at that time? Fifteen years old! As for us, now a fifteen-year-old [probably] knows nothing, this showed the brilliance of the person [Atisha]! Therefore, you should read it carefully; *The Biography of Venerable Atisha* is truly touching!

[4B, 09.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 118 L6]

So, his family background was really great. Under such excellent conditions, [the royal family] was not able to persuade him [to forsake the idea of renunciation] - if it were us now, forsaking [royal enjoyment] would be impossible. In other words, these were his virtuous roots from previous lives. Later, after his ordination, the teachers he relied on were all prominent at the time, whether it was profound-view or extensive-deeds, [his teachers] were all in the top ranks. The first one was Shōteki Brahmaṇa (勝敵), then Avadhutipa, and he advanced step by step. As for this Vidyakokila, this Great Vidyakokila was the third or fourth generation disciple of Nagarjuna. [Atisha’s teachers were] such persons at the time. For example, at our present time, doctrine is seriously discussed by both Madhyamaka and Yogacara schools. Everyone recognized that Madhyamaka

is the most profound one. The authority of Madhyamaka is Candrakirti. [Vidyakokila] was the disciple of Candrakirti, the first generation disciple. Such noble beings! Besides, what was [their] attainment? [They] achieved at least path-of-preparation and above.

[4B, 10.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 118 L14]

This path-of-preparation follows the order of the extensive-deeds lineage, when we bring up our Chinese great teachers; we know there was one, who was the teacher of Master Zhi-zhe from the Tian-tai lineage - Hui-si Zen Master. He attained beyond the stage of path-of-preparation. You can imagine how superior this stage of achievement was! So there are many high practitioners in our history who had attained great Enlightenment, please note that many are beyond great Enlightenment! Buddha also achieved ultimate Enlightenment, whereas many enlightened teachers in the past were ordinary beings, this we should understand. Don't rely on what we just said [judging the ranking of attainment]. For example, great master Han-shan achieved supreme enlightenment at his time, and people asked him, "Well, how do you compare yourself with past Teachers like great Master Zhi-zhe of Tian-tai?" "Oh, how can I be compared with him, this person is eminent, I have only achieved an awakened mind!" Well, you see, Master Han-shan was one of the four great masters in the late Ming dynasty, the most distinguished and enlightened one, Master Han-shan even thought highly of Master Zhi-zhe. We lack the understanding of the ranking; once you have this idea of ranking, the [mind state of] Bodhisattvas who attained the path-of-preparation is beyond description.

[4B, 11.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 119 L7]

Venerable Atisha had over ten great masters as his teachers! The least achieved among them was beyond path-of-preparation and, in the end; Venerable Atisha still praised the great merits of his teachers. [In fact,] he acquired each [of their good qualities]. From this perspective, he surpassed all of his teachers. Why? If he possessed the merits of one teacher, then he was equal to this teacher; yet he possessed the merits of all teachers, so other teachers might not be the same as him [in upholding all teachers' good qualities]! How many in China had such a quality? Unable to find one from amongst the founding teachers in the [Chinese] Buddhist community, there was one in the mundane world - Confucius. Confucius learned extensively from all schools of thought; so he was an expert in all of them, and what did that turn him into? [Confucius] collected all of the sacred teachings [at his time]. This was the same with Venerable Atisha at his time in India; he was the head of religions in India.

[4B, 12.17; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 119 L13]

There was a custom in India at that time, there were many different schools at all major temples, and each temple had its own school of thought. Take the present state of China for example: this one is Zen meditation, this other one is Pure Land. As for Zen meditation sects, there is Lin-ji as well as Cao-dong. Within each school, it has one prominent achiever as the head of the school. This has a symbol, what is the symbol? It is the key [to the temples], the head of the school held the key - that was how it worked. In the end, the keys that Venerable Atisha held before he left India for Tibet, it may have been one hundred and eight or eight hundred keys, I am not certain which and this was from the translation. Anyway, he held all the keys of the major temples in India at his time. [Atisha was the one

who] thoroughly understood all of the scriptural collections of these eighteen schools. So no matter which school, as long as there was argument or question, you just ask him and he would then solve it for you. Hinayana relied on him to solve Hinayana questions; Mahayana questions also relied on him; the same with profound-view as well as extensive-deeds, he was so remarkable!

[4B, 13.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 120 L7]

In China, we really are not able to find [one like Atisha]. You may say, “Well, Venerable Du-shun was also remarkable, he was the founder of Xian-shou School (賢首宗).” Oh well, sorry, Tian-tai might not agree! Just considering this person to be remarkable does not necessarily mean that he is regarded as the most admirable! Let’s use a more recent example: after the founding of the Republic [of China], there were a few great teachers. We often mention Venerable Xu-yun, Venerable Yin-guang, Venerable Tai-xu, and so on! I once heard a great high Monk - most of these high Monks were elderly. We often say so and so great master, this certain high monk said, “Yin-guang [known for his practice of chanting Buddha’s name], this old monk...” Sigh, why? This certain high monk practices meditation, so he might disagree with those who chant Buddha’s name. On the contrary, those who recite Buddha’s name might say: “Zen Master Xu-yun was really remarkable, but [his practice of Zen] may not be suitable for contemporary times.” Actually, in our Chinese history, never was there a single [teacher] respected by both the given period of time as well as the later generations; however, Venerable Atisha [was respected] in all of India by all lineages and schools. Even until he left for Tibet, some still traveled thousands of miles to ask him questions. I will

not go into too much detail here, just bring up the general outline. Below, the author divided the content into several portions; the first one is on [page 36]:

[Note: Xian-shou School (賢首宗) major on *the Array of Stalks Sutra*; Tian-tai School major on *the Lotus Sutra*]

[4B, 14.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 121 L3]

B. How upon that basis he gained good qualities

- 1. How, upon knowing many texts, he gained the good qualities of scriptural knowledge**
- 2. How, engaging in proper practice, he gained the good qualities of experiential knowledge**

The first section is about his origin, the perfection of [his] family origin. The second is about the learning and practicing of Buddha Dharma - there must be two steps for applying Buddha Dharma - scriptural and experiential knowledges. Scripture is the cause - your proper understanding of the teaching is the cause - and then [you must] abide by the teaching to practice in order to produce the effect. Therefore, scriptural and experiential knowledge have a reciprocal cause-and-effect relationship. By the same token, if you lack clear understanding of this concept, you will encounter difficulty. So when Lama Tsong-kha-pa composed [the prologue of] this text, he said [v.1 p.33], “Nowadays those making effort at yoga have studied few [of the classic texts], while those who have studied much are not skilled in the key points of practice.” This is due to the lack of understanding of cause-and-effect relations; without the cause, how can the effect be achieved? So now, the author tells us that the first is: teaching comes first, the knowledge taught is extensive and, at that time, [the teaching] was perfect and complete. Then, among the teachings, it begins from worldly [knowledge] and is followed

by spiritual training. Then, within the spiritual training, it is further divided in several parts: ethical discipline, meditative-serenity, and wisdom [three precious trainings]. Ethical discipline is also divided into vows of individual liberation, Bodhisattva vows, and Vajrasattva vows. Each step is clearly distinguished for step-by-step advancement.

[4B, 16.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 121 L13]

Frequently, we are prone to this tendency: Mahayana claiming Hinayana precepts are not necessary. This is totally wrong! For without the foundation of Hinayana precepts, there would not be Bodhisattva vows. Without Bodhisattva vows, there would not be the Samaya vows of Vajrayana. So you see, when a great guru like Venerable Atisha studied ethical discipline, he thoroughly mastered all of them. At that time, the four basic principles of Hinayana and their twenty subdivisions, he could clearly distinguish them without any confusion. Upon taking the precepts, [he] upheld them closely without transgressing even the tiniest infraction. Based on this foundation, later [he took] Bodhisattva vows and then Vajrayana vows. Due to this [mindful application of the teachings] in India, whether they were Hinayana, Mahayana, profound-view, or extensive-deeds, they all admired him. He also was able to resolve issues in every section with proper reasoning. This is ethical discipline, when it is perfected, meditative-serenity will arise from it, and then wisdom [arise from meditative-serenity]; this part is for benefiting the self.

[4B, 17.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 122 L6]

With this self-benefit, then benefiting others will become available. Otherwise, while you don't even have solution for

yourself and try to help others, wouldn't that be absurd! It is especially impossible in Buddhism. Why do we mention this? The essence in Buddha Dharma, yes, is to resolve all sufferings and to attain complete, perfect happiness, while this suffering and happiness is very different from the worldly [understanding of suffering and happiness]. The reason that the conventional world is not able to solve this [suffering] issue is due to ignorance, the inability to recognize the true nature of reality, and the inability to reverse it to produce the effect. Undoubtedly, we have treated sufferings as happiness. Thus, the emergence of Buddha is to point out the worldly truth and to teach us the true nature of this world.

[4B, 18.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 122 L12]

As of now, we do not understand the steps required to study Buddha Dharma. Thus, the steps required to learn Buddhism are: by understanding the fact of suffering in the mundane world, it must begin from being inspired to renounce. With this inspiration, and then... Why [do we] need renunciation? Because [you] think: alas, this world is actually filled with suffering! I was not able to recognize it and have been muddled by it! I have been fooled by ignorance, so [now] I develop a great aversion! With this understanding and disgust, one-pointedly yearn to escape, and apply the same to others. There was saying that we as practitioners should honor the moral standard. In the secular world, generally people who have some level of moral value are not self-centered, to say nothing of a practitioner! Thus, the practitioner extends it further to apply the same [avoid suffering and attain happiness concept] onto others and the willingness to help others.

**[4B, 18.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 123
L3]**

By the time [the practitioner] wants to help others, he will have this sense from within, “Alas, this world is so wrong; everyone is confused and it is difficult to separate from attachment.” At that time, the advice for others would be, “Alas, you have to recognize it clearly, do not be attached. The reason that you are not able to resolve your suffering is due to not knowing it!” This is a Mahayana act. If we do not recognize this - not knowing the truth of this world - and still grasp onto attachment, when you try to convince others, what kind of persuasion can you provide! Isn't it clear? This world is very good! I myself am reluctant to let go, and trying to tell others to let go, isn't it ridiculous? How can this Mahayana mentality be groomed? In fact, too many of us are engaged in this type of business [of not behaving in accordance with our words].

**[4B, 19.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 123
L9]**

However, there is one thing we need to understand: once we have this recognition, we should not randomly criticize others. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas come to this world must manifest in a level that is common to us, associate among us as our companions. The Buddha or Bodhisattva is like you, mingling with us and gradually approaching and guiding you. We should have this proper understanding - with this in mind we can examine ourselves and advance forward. So the above concept is for us to reflect on ourselves. Only when [you are] practicing Buddha Dharma, if you can examine yourself this way, then you are on the right track; never apply it to others. If you do so, you have wronged. So in all respects, the Sutras taught us that

you should understand this [examining the self], you need to understand, this [concept] is very important!

[4B, 20.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 124 L1]

Without this understanding, studying the teaching will not bring you benefit, but, rather, will bring you harm. Why? Because you are not applying Buddha Dharma, your standard is worldly, which is of course contaminated and careless; and people out there are about the same. Now you have studied the Buddha Dharma, understand that it has very high standard - Buddha's standard! Then you apply this high standard, but instead of self-purifying, [you] apply the reflection on others. It becomes a magic mirror - look into it, wow, everyone out there is a demon or goblin! Isn't it simple [to reflect on others]? For there is only one Buddha in this universe and Buddha went into his nirvana; hence, no one in this world is perfect, so they are all demons or goblins. There is only one who missed being reflected in the mirror, who is that? Me. In the first place, this [Dharma] mirror is for self-purification, for your own reflection, but, unfortunately, you misapplied it - for you viewed everyone as demons or goblins, and you blamed others. As a result, you fall into hell [because of this] mistaken perception! So, the degenerate time is known as "firm confrontation," this we should know.

[4B, 21.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 124 L10]

Upon understanding the above concept, it is to know that the purification is for the self, everyone else is a Buddha or Bodhisattva. So, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas appear as various objects. We often take Pu-tuo Mountain [an island southwest of Shanghai], which is filled with people of all walks of life. Among them are the manifestations of

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, these manifest beings told us not to randomly reflect on others! This shows the integrity of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, it is due to their compassion to reveal this capacity. Upon this understanding, we will naturally refrain from reflecting on others but rather on the self. If we cannot mentally let go [renounce the world], never say, “Well, I am Mahayana, only Hinayana cares to renounce!” This is wrong, we must recognize this. One must cultivate renunciation, and then advance to develop the spirit of enlightenment, and continuously carry on.

[4B, 21.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 125 L1]

So, Lama Tsong-kha-pa is a typical example, since he thoroughly understood the sequence, so he would never say, “Ah, renunciation is for Hinayana, so [we] don’t need to worry about the precepts of Hinayana.” You can tell [from his biography] that he seriously abided by Hinayana precepts with not even a speck of mistake! Based on the above, the establishment of Bodhisattva vows becomes available and then the Vajrayana vows are even more available. [Our] present time is pretty bad, many Mahayana practitioners say, “I am a Mahayana, Hinayana is not needed.” Some Vajrayana practitioners are even worse, since Vajrayana is the best - drinking alcohol, eating meat, and getting married, to be regarded as the most superior.” Alas, the actual teaching should not be like this!

[4B, 22.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 125 L7]

So, here, if we can have proper understanding: on the one hand, to benefit oneself is important; on the other hand, in case you make a mistake [while applying precepts], if you recognize this while you are examining it, the possibility of taking a wrong turn will not happen - this point is also very

important! So, on one hand, [the text] explains the greatness of the author to show us how to rely on virtuous teachers. On the other hand, this example also allows us to recognize that we should not be fooled by situation in front of us. So this benefits oneself, the section below on [page 40] is about benefiting others.

English LR v.1 p.40

**[4B, 23.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 125
L12]**

A. Having gained those good qualities, what Atisha did to further the teachings

- 1. What he did in India**
- 2. What he did in Tibet**

In other words, this section is purely about benefiting others. [Atisha's] first part of benefiting others was in India, the second part was in Tibet. I will not go over this in detail. In general, due to the emergence of Venerable Atisha, the teachings were reformed in India as well as all of Tibet, what was wrong was corrected, what was incomplete was completed, and, for this reason, [his influence] lasted for a very long period of time. In fact, Lama Tsong-kha-pa did the same thing as well. So, from Lama Tsong-kha-pa's reformation six hundred years ago to now, his influence in Tibet remained like the sun at high noon for a long time. Even though the condition gradually declined, it is still very well maintained. Consequently, in our present time, we have a messy domestic situation [in Chinese Buddhist communities]. The reason being that the cause lies in here [the lack of an influential restoration], this is the fact we should know.

[4B, 24.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 126 L5]

So, at the end, I will apply two short stories to explain this, using them to inspire our understanding. During the time in India, Nalanda had several tens, several tens of great teachers such as: Venerable Vidyakokila, Master Avadhutipa, etc. What is more, yes, come to think of it, there is a popular book now - *The Biography of Venerable Milarepa* - I believe a lot of people have read this book. This Venerable Milarepa was a Tibetan, so was his teacher Venerable Marpa **Error! Reference source not found.** . At that time, Venerable Marpa went to India to beseech Dharma. His teacher Venerable Tilopa had attained very high achievement and was an Indian. And this Venerable Tilopa was one of Venerable Atisha's teachers, wait, not Tilopa, Venerable Naropa. Tilopa was the teacher of Venerable Naropa. Venerable Naropa himself was also a prince from one of the countries in India - a prince. He renounced the household, was not willing to stay in the palace; [he] tried all possibilities to be ordained and finally succeeded. He was extremely intelligent, too. It was the same for his learning - both worldly knowledge and, after ordination, the knowledge on Buddhist doctrine. [Naropa] was regarded as the most influential practitioner at his time, so remarkable! Finally, Naropa met with his teacher [Tilopa], and achieved the highest level of experiential knowledge.

[*Tilopa → Naropa → Atisha/Marpa → Milarepa]

[4B, 25.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 127 L1]

When Venerable Atisha was in India, there were many, many great achievers! In the end, well, from these teachers he almost mastered all of their virtuous characteristics. Venerable Atisha had the same characteristics, too. Finally,

he became the holder of the keys of all the major Indian temples - can you believe it? This was only about benefiting oneself. As for benefiting others, here is something about the Dharma in Tibet [at the time]: for the Tibetan king Jangchup-ö [and his nephew], both generations tried to revitalize the Buddha Dharma, they sought teachings in India. [In India at that time,] there were many achievers, such as the aforementioned Venerable Naropa. However, in order to thoroughly revive Buddha Dharma, there was only one being. Which one? Venerable Atisha. Thus, Tibetans tried to implore him [to go to Tibet], but the Indians heard that someone was coming [for Atisha], well, this news was suppressed immediately. Not just inside the temple, they also totally blocked the news everywhere. Once they knew there were Tibetans approaching, "Fine!" They would not say anything in front of [Atisha]. After many years of beseeching, the [Tibetan] delegation searched for many years, they could not find the whereabouts of Venerable Atisha. Actually, Venerable Atisha was right in front of them. Wherever they encountered people, no one revealed the identity of Venerable Atisha. Imagine this being that was highly respected by Indians, such a high status, very high status!

[4B, 27.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 127 L12]

Finally, he was recognized, and by the time they were going to invite him - not sure which temple it was, I forgot about [the name] - the senior monk of... could be Vikramasila, not sure; the largest temple in India [at that time].

[5A, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 131 L1]

The senior monk of this great temple turned to the Tibetan who came to invite Venerable Atisha and said, “You have to realize that we [the country of] India are the empire of Buddhism.” What does that mean? “It means that Buddha was born in India, and the perfect teaching is all here. Therefore, the maintenance of this tradition is very important. Once Venerable Atisha leaves [India], Buddhism in India will come to an end.” At that time, there were so many excellent teachers, yet he [the senior monk] actually said that if Venerable Atisha left [India], Buddhism in India would be done! Just imagine, you can imagine how valuable Venerable Atisha was!

[5A, 00.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 131 L6]

This point is hard for us to comprehend, how could this be? For example, our elder Master Kuang-chin, or Teacher Lee [these were teachers at the time of this teaching was recorded in Taiwan], ah! [Both of them were] remarkable indeed - however, they were not compatible with Venerable Atisha. Thereafter, in history, there was the Tian-tai lineage of Master Zhi-zhe and Zen Master Hui-si. Both were extraordinary, but there was no one like [Atisha] to uphold Teachings in their entirety. Thus, you can envision the achievement of Venerable Atisha in benefiting self and others in India; this is why people honored him as “Shakyamuni the second!” These details will be skipped. There is something that I would like to specify here: on [page 42], please turn to [page 42 - line 9, the second paragraph of page 42]:

English LR v.1 p.42

[5A, 01.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 132 L3]

Furthermore, there are three ideal qualifications for an author of texts that elucidate the intent of the Sage in this way.

To compose a commentary and to reveal all of Buddha's intentions requires three substantial causes [v1 p.94]. Atisha was endowed with all of the qualifications, and could clearly deliver the true intention of the scriptures. What are these three qualifications?

The author (1) should have mastered the five topics of knowledge

[5A, 02.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 132 L7]

This is the first qualification. What does it mean by "mastered the five topics of knowledge?" It is the five topics of knowledge [v2 p.212] - they are all the conventional and spiritual knowledge: logic, grammar, technical arts, and medicine are conventional. Grammar, in other words, is the knowledge of writing, phonetics, and rhetoric. In our contemporary terms, it is topics such as language and history. As for logic, it is about reasoning and philosophy. Then, for technical arts, it is related to craftsmanship and technology. Medicine is the science of medicine. To master them all, wow, it is not easy! Whereas for us now, learning one thing in depth is already very remarkable - to study extensively, it is not easy at all! Is this [mastering these four] enough? Not at all, there is the requirement of Buddhist knowledge - Dharma. To master each one of these five requires skillful means: not only comprehension, but also understanding it in its entirety. Once endowed with all these, that's it! This is the first substantial cause. What about the second?

[5A, 03.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 133 L2]

(2) should possess instructions

What does it mean by instructions? It explains:

[5A, 03.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 133 L4]

that are the key points for practicing the meaning of the topics of Buddhist knowledge which have been transmitted in an unbroken lineage through excellent beings from perfect Buddha;

He said that this important concept of the complete teachings of Buddha is passed down personally from the Buddha and this lineage is unbroken. Not only the teachings, but the corresponding cultivation and experience are also required, which is not easy, it is quite difficult! The required endowments of complete oral transmission from Buddha and the conforming experiential attainment have to be fulfilled - then, he [the author] is certainly ready to compose the treatise. What is the third qualification?

[5A, 04.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 133 L9]

and (3) should receive permission to compose the text in a vision of his or her chosen deity.

Upon achieving the experiential attainment, well, the author still needs to receive permission from his chosen deity. What does it mean by permission from the chosen deity? Let me explain it. For example, we are chanting Buddha's name. Often, when we chant, we only verbally maintain the Buddha's name in our chanting. If we visualize

Buddha while chanting, no matter whether you sustain the name of Buddha or visualize it, not only can you achieve one-pointed concentration, but also Samadhi [perfect absorption]. Not only can you obtain Samadhi, but you will also meet Amitabha Buddha. Not only can you meet Amitabha Buddha, Amitabha Buddha tells you, “Well, you almost completed your learning, this is the right track! You should be able to teach others now.” With this, to have this achievement, well, to us it is very difficult, very difficult!

**[5A, 04.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 134
L2]**

Especially for studying and applying this encompassing teaching, most of the time when [the practitioner] receives permission from the chosen deity, the achievement may need to be at path-of-preparation or above; [the practitioner] has to be at least a first-level Bodhisattva or above. So, [for us to recognize] these people [those above path-of-preparation], we are most likely muddled and are not able to recognize them. Upon full attainment of the complete teaching, then distinguishing between demon and Buddha will be very clear. Therefore, if you meet [Buddha] in person and experience his permission, what a high level of mind state! Upon possessing this qualification, one can compose a treatise. Now, our Venerable Atisha was completely endowed with all three qualifications – you can imagine how excellent he was! This is to specifically explain the greatness of the teaching’s author. For the rest of the text, I will not go into detail, [I will] not go over them.

CHAPTER 1 OUTLINE: ATISHA

1. Showing the greatness of the teaching's author in order to establish that it is of noble origin p.35
- a. How he took rebirth in an excellent lineage p.36
- b. How upon that basis he gained good qualities
 1. How, knowing many texts, he gained the good qualities of scriptural knowledge
 2. How, engaging in proper practice, he gained the good qualities of experiential knowledge p.38 **3 trainings**
 - a. That Atisha possessed the training in **ethics**
 1. How Atisha possessed superior vows of individual liberation
 2. That Atisha Possessed the bodhisattva vows
 3. That Atisha possessed the vows of the Vajrayana (tantrayana, or mantrayana) p.39
 - b. That Atisha possessed the training in **concentration** p.40
 1. The training in concentration common to SUTRA and TANTRA: Common (shared): by means of meditative serenity the mind became serviceable
 2. The training in the uncommon concentrations: Uncommon: the reaching of a very stable stage of generation due to having **practiced the deeds of proficient conduct**.
 - c. That Atisha possessed the training in **wisdom**
 1. The common training in wisdom: Gained a concentration of insight that was a **union of meditative serenity and insight (wisdom)**
 2. The uncommon training in wisdom: Uncommon: Gained a special concentration of the stage of completion.
- c. Having gained those good qualities, what Atisha did to further the Teachings
 1. **What he did in India:** All of the schools, without partisanship, consider him a crown jewel.
 2. **What he did in Tibet** p.41
 - a. He **re-established** the practices of the Buddhist system that had disappeared; he **reinvigorated** those that remained only slightly; and he **removed corruption** based on misconceptions.
 - b. P.42 There are three ideal qualifications for an author of texts that elucidate the intent of the Sage in this way. The author:
 - i. Should have mastered the **five topics of knowledge**
 - ii. Should possess instructions that are the key points for practicing the meaning of the topics of Buddhist knowledge which have been transmitted in an **unbroken lineage through excellent beings from the perfect Buddha**
 - iii. Should receive **permission to compose the text** in a vision of his or her chosen deity.

This great master (Atisha) was endowed with all three.

 - c. P.45 Concerning the teaching to be explained, the root text of these instructions is the Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment.

P.43 The Greatness of the author. It can be known in detail from the great biographical literature.

Story:

p.41 early dissemination:

Songtsen Gampo (620-649 AD) Tibetan king, he was said to be the manifestation of Great Compassionate Bodhisattva (Avalokiteshvara), who married a princess from Nepal and a princess from Tang Dynasty; in the hope to establish Buddhism in Tibet via the marriage relations from the 2 Buddhism countries.

5 generations later the kingdom was passed to Trisong Detsen (755-797 AD considered as the manifestation of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva Manjushri) the king, who invited the great Teacher Lotus Born (Padmasambhava also known as Guru Rinpoche) to tame the chaotic mis-conceptions in the region and helped establish the monastic system in Tibet.

p.42 later dissemination:

Refers to the uncle and nephew (mentioned on p.41) Tibetan kings between 10th and 11th centuries. They tried 71 years finally invited Atisha (982-1054 AD) to come from India. From then on Tibetan Buddhism foundation became stronger.

Footnote

Hinayana/Theravada (monastic vow is the main focus)

Mahayana (focus on both monastic vows & Bodhisattva vows)

Sutrayana = perfection vehicle = paramita vehicle

Mantrayana = Tantrayana = Vajrayana (tantric vows based on monastic vows/Bodhisattva vows)

CHAPTER 2: THE GREATNESS OF THE TEACHING

[5A, 05.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 134 L8]

Turn to the next page, there is a paragraph that I will go over. [Page 45], first paragraph, this is actually the second point [from bottom of v. 1 p.34], the second part:

English LR v.1 p.45

[5A, 05.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 134 L10]

Concerning the teaching to be explained, the root text of these instructions is the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. There are many texts composed by the Elder, but the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* is comprehensive and fundamental.

Within the greatness of the teaching, what are the benefits of the teaching? The blueprint for this Lamrim is *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Venerable Atisha composed various texts, but the most fundamental and the most complete one is this *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. What is fundamental? Complete in what? Let's make it clear. Generally, when we talk about science, there are two aspects: one is the cooperative condition and the other is the substantial condition [v1 p.94]. The substantial condition is fundamental; the cooperative condition is to enable the completion. For example, one is the qualitative nature; the other is the quantitative fulfillment of capacity. Both of these two are endowed in the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. Even though Venerable Atisha composed many texts, this is it. This is not just for Atisha – Buddha was the same. Every accomplished practitioner, he or she provided various teachings and, due to their differences in root nature and conformity level, the teaching methods included all sorts of differences. But there is one unique characteristic, to thoroughly disclose the entirety of experiential knowledge from the very first step until ultimate enlightenment. This is the most extraordinary value [of a

text] and the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* is qualified as one of these types of text. Therefore, here we say, well, the author is outstanding and the teaching itself is also great! Why? His explanation follows:

[5A, 07.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 135 L8]
Since it teaches by drawing together the key points for both the sutra and mantra vehicles, its subject matter is comprehensive;

First, this includes the essence of both Sutrayana and Tantrayana; therefore, the content itself is fully complete. It did not mention the lesser vehicle, for Mahayana has to rely on the foundation of Hinayana. It is like we often say, “What is your educational background?” “Oh, I graduated from so and so graduate school.” There is no need to mention which kindergarten, which elementary school, which high school. Provided that you graduated from the graduate school, you must have attained all the prerequisites. This is very clear, very obvious, that is how it works. However, in Mahayana teachings, it is actually divided into two parts, they both are complete. Within this, the first qualities are fulfilled. In fact, the completeness of qualities must include a systematic order. It is emphasized again here:

[5A, 08.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 136 L2]
Since it emphasizes the stages of disciplining the mind, it is easy to put into practice;

In addition, the systematic order is also complete, what is the benefit of its completeness? “It is easy to put into practice.” When you are actually advancing, the systematic order is required. Once the order is mixed up, you will not be able to advance any further; besides, there will be the burden of various hardships. Even if you make it, there will be many wasted efforts. This is where its true benefit is. Consequently, there is another special characteristic:

[5A, 08.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 136 L6]
and since it is adorned with the instructions of two gurus who were skilled in the systems of the two great trailblazers, it is superior to other systems.

Thus, the Mahayana we are passing on is via two trailblazers: one is the profound-view and the other is extensive-deeds. Now, both trailblazers are fully endowed. These two, one emphasizes the “view” and the other the “deed”. The meaning of emphasize does not mean to neglect [one or the other]! Both have to be absolutely fulfilled – although they are complete, they each have different emphases. Now, in combining the two, they can complement each other to achieve the completeness to their fullest. Hence, it surpasses the various contents of all other lineages; this is its greatness. As for the greatness of its content, it is divided into the following parts:

English LR v.1 p.46

[5A, 09.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 136 L12]

II. Showing the greatness of the teaching in order to engender respect for the instructions

The greatness of the teaching is indicated by four qualities it elicits in the student:

The content of Lamrim, the essence of its content, its greatness, and outstanding qualities are illustrated in four parts:

[5A, 09.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 137 L1]

1. Knowing that all of the teachings are free of contradiction

2. Coming to understand that all of the scriptures are instructions of practice

3. Easily finding the Conqueror’s intent

4. Automatically refraining from great wrongdoing

[This section is] divided into four parts; these four parts will be explained and discussed briefly now. First, this text that we are about to learn, it thoroughly includes all sublime teachings. This is the first one. From the view of its whole content, it includes the all-encompassing teachings from Buddha. However, under normal circumstances, the teachings that we understand may seem to have differences, even conflicts with each other. Some said the profound-view teaches emptiness, while the extensive-deeds expound dependent arising – this is incorrect. [They also say that] the teachings between Hinayana and Mahayana often seem to be incompatible, that they cannot accommodate each other. Now, the author says, it not only includes everything, but is also absolutely free of contradiction. This absence of contradiction shows that their co-existence generates even more harmonious compatibility.

[5A, 11.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 137 L9]

Often, when we are learning the teachings, the biggest disturbance is this [feeling of compatibility]. So we are taught to learn from the complete teachings and, as a result, monks will explain them differently. By the time you read the sutra, they show further differences, and you don't know what to adopt and what to cast aside. You may even withdraw [from learning]. Now, let's take a look at those Buddhism practitioners: some meditate on this and others on that, they express different views between each other, and you don't know what to adopt or cast aside. Take it one step further – briefly, let's take a look. Even now in our organization, it seems that you do not have ways to settle

those differences. Now, it is not like that! It not only includes everything, but also complements one another.

[5A, 12.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 138 L1]

From the point of view of its true meaning, this refers to the profound and vast teachings. Buddha's teaching, we should understand, is not about lecturing theories; now, after the teaching ends, we engage in other things after the class. Not so! Buddha Dharma is to tame our mental and physical afflictions. In other words, [afflictions] are things that are in conflict. Hence, since the teaching is profound and vast, by the same token, the taming is profound and vast. What about our coarse and fierce [afflictive] mind state? Based on the above, Buddha Dharma is also capable of taming our current contaminations accordingly. If this were not the case, then it is farce; Buddha would never teach this [conflictive teaching].

[5A, 13.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 138 L7]

Now, the reason why we are not able to put [the teaching] into good use is due to our lack of skillful familiarity in applying Buddha Dharma. As of now, this "knowing that all the teachings are free of contradictions" [is because] it can be applied in our everyday lives to harmonize conflicts, to be capable of reconciliation. Due to this cause, you will be able to advance step by step. Otherwise, our coarse tendencies cannot even tame simple issues – you are not able to handle them, and then you claim to defeat the afflictions of all living beings in the three realms, isn't it empty talk? Isn't it absurd?

[5A, 14.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 138 L12]

On the other hand, now it [the afflictions of all living beings] is very hard to tame, so I will retreat by closing my door to meditate, this is one way to do it. But, I'm sorry to

say, under this circumstance, only with a tiny bit [of practice], your little improvement of course will not have any conflict [with the teachings], but all-inclusive taming is not possible, this should be very clear. So, truthfully speaking, thorough knowledge with no contradiction toward the sublime teachings has to begin from this step in front of us. Conversely, we have to start from step one now, and then step-by-step advancement becomes available, eventually reaches the most profound state. We should recognize this principle. Otherwise, all your lengthy preaching of Buddha Dharma becomes farce.

[5A, 14.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 139 L4]

However, here is one clarification. In the beginning while we are learning these theories, it does not seem like we can apply them right away. Actually, any random examples we have are like this, they are all like this. For instance, our schooling – when you first attend kindergarten, if you try to apply what you have learned right away, it is hard, correct? For anything we engage in doing or learning, your knowledge of this thing in the beginning - your [familiarity toward] this tool or whatever prior to becoming used to it - that is because you have not yet grasped the essence. Hence, we should recognize the true benefit of this text – this is the way it works! With this recognition, then Buddha Dharma can truly be applied without any farce; not only without contention, but it can actually be applied to resolve all issues.

[5A, 15.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 139 L11]

The second is “coming to understand that all of the scriptures are instructions of practice.” During our process of studying Buddha Dharma, there will be a phenomenon: some people say that they are in favor of this and do not accept that; others prefer a certain way, and then cannot

make use of this [way of practice]. This situation occurs especially in the Zen lineage. The Zen lineage holds its own particular value, but it developed until it seemed to think that Buddha's sutra was of no use, seemed useless. [The sutra] is for relying on the word of great teachers – they give you “a hint by glancing at you” and this is considered approval [for your practice]. It has its particular meaning; let's go over it now. That is to say, the original purpose of Buddha's teaching, what was the original intention of the sutra? It is like the “moon-pointing-finger” – when the moon is pointed out to you, the finger is actually not the moon. However, to recognize the moon, you have to rely on that finger to show you the direction; this is the function of the sutra.

[5A, 17.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 140 L4]

Maybe we can say, for example, that we are now going somewhere and someone shows you a map. The map is definitely not the place itself. Like a road in Tai-chung city [a city in central Taiwan], of course the map is a piece of paper, but how can it represent the road? But if you recognize it clearly, you can then follow the directions shown on the map and arrive at the destination. So this is how the map works. Once you recognize that place, upon arrival, the map is not needed. Some do not understand this point – maybe it is because of their habits or maybe it is due to some specific reason, but they are then attached firmly to the map, insist that the map is Tai-chung. For instance, I am holding the map of Tai-chung in my hand now, and the original intention of this map is to show him how to reach Tai-chung; now he says that [the map] is Tai-chung. In this situation, you have no choice but to take away the map and tear it up. “How can this be Tai-chung? The map is to show you where the location is.” If the message does not get through, the person guiding should simply tear up the map. This is a sort of painstaking effort of teachers of the lineage.

[5A, 18.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 140 L14]

Even those patriarchs of the Zen lineage use various ways of explanation. If necessary, they also use common and popular dialects to teach. What is the sutra? It is said to be “falling leaves to coax the crying child.” It is a case study by the teachers of the lineage: the child was crying out loud, the adult picked up a leaf from the ground, a yellow leaf that fell on the ground. It indicates something with little usefulness that is taken to tease the child. The child looked at it and was pleased by it, stopped crying, that is good! You may say, how can we compare this precious sutra with the useless fallen leaves on the ground? Great teacher of the lineage did not mean to make this comparison; this is a metaphor to illustrate how to stop a child from crying by applying this method that is all.

[5A, 19.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 141 L6]

This is to show that ordinary beings do not understand the true nature of worldly reality, so they are constantly submerged in upside-down ignorance, enduring various sufferings and afflictions, just like a crying child that is suffering. Whereas now, Buddha is leading us with skillful means to stop your crying; once it stops, things are fine! That is how it works. Hence, he [the Buddha] uses various methods for those who cannot grasp the principles of the sutras. He begins from the root cause to point out the central points – that is how it works, just like that. Due to this [cause and effect] relationship, the direction is gradually, gradually wandered. To say, “Ah, now sutras are not needed,” this is a mistake. May [I] ask if the sutras were not needed, how would you apply Buddha Dharma? The intended meaning of the sutras is to guide you with Buddhist practice; certainly once you get it, of course you won’t need it. Hence, it is like the saying in the *Diamond Sutra*, that you

are crossing the river between life and death. To cross a river, you must use a boat – you have to. Once you have crossed it, crossed the river of life and death, what happens to the boat? Naturally you won't need it; of course you don't need it. You cannot say that, after crossing the river, you are attached to the boat, isn't it absurd? Even walking away with the boat on your back is not necessary, so we need to recognize clearly the systematic order [for applying the teachings].

[5A, 20.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 142 L1]

As a matter of fact, if you are able to understand the scriptural directly then they are the best guidance. Yet, due to your lack of capacity, that did not happen, so [great teachers] use skillful methods and straightforward language to teach you. Such specific methods, their foundations are still true scriptural teachings, this we should understand, and truly appreciate it. What is the reason for this? It is because we are unable to grasp the key point. In this circumstance, the most important thing is to understand the key point of what the sutras taught us and to eradicate our attachment within. Unfortunately, you prefer the explanation of some schools of thought and forsake the sutra – this is even worse, even worse! So he [the author] specifically pointed out to us: the phenomena we are facing now, what are their causes? This is to illustrate that, if you thoroughly study this text with great care, we will know that all the scriptures and teachings from great teachers of the lineage are the best guidance and, based on these teachings, we should be able to eradicate and purify our afflictions.

[5A, 22.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 142 L10]

Up to now, I will mention that from the beginning of this text, it specifically explains that practitioners nowadays do not need sutras and that those who teach scriptures don't

apply them. Now, in every aspect, these feelings are especially strong in recent years. It is unmistakable – this is where our problems lie. We often emphasize rules and then, because of two different standards, two people can argue until total disorder and chaos ensue. To enter Buddhism to argue about regulations, what is the point? The original intentions of regulations are to tame your afflictions and enhance harmony in the group. It turns out, with more regulation, the more divisive the group becomes and afflictions increase without self-awareness. One insists, “I am right,” and the other says, “I am right.” This is a serious and terrible phenomenon. Here, this text gives us a very good instruction, very good guidance. So I highly encourage and suggest to everyone, do not take the text literally, it is a great loss to do so. Moreover, for those who take it literally, they will not be able to apply accordingly. They should temporarily step back to establish the foundation, otherwise it is a waste to them. This is my interpretation in passing.

[5A, 23.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 143 L5]

Let's move on to “easily finding the Conqueror's intent.” The Conqueror is the Buddha, the ultimate enlightened one. The key content is the so-called Conqueror's intent. Why mention this intent? The original intention of the scripture was to introduce us to the profound meaning of Buddha Dharma. But because we lack capacity, in our recognition of each word - even with this recognition - [we lack the capacity for] the aforementioned regulation and reasoning. But what are the purposes for these regulations and reasoning? No clue, clueless. At that time, with the guidance of a virtuous teacher, we realize, “Oh, so this is what he meant!” This will save us a lot of effort, a lot of inconvenience. As for this inconvenience, the shortest can be several decades; the longest may be countless eons, engaged in what? A few decades are only wasting some

time; as for the long eon, we are usually submerged in miserable realms enduring immeasurable suffering. Whereas now, by the proper guidance of this virtuous teacher, you can quickly grasp, oh, so this is the true content of why he taught it this way – you then understand. Upon understanding, you then apply it accordingly, put it into practice. Your suffering is purified and your contaminated deeds are transformed into virtuous deeds. The cause of cyclic existence is resolved! The conqueror's intent is there to benefit self and others.

[5A, 25.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 144 L1]

Lastly, “automatically refraining from great wrongdoing.” This great wrongdoing is specifically referring to one thing: normally we ignorant ordinary beings are constantly engaged in nonvirtuous deeds, but rarely anything major. This great wrongdoing is particularly referring to slandering the Dharma. Among all wrongdoing, the sin of slandering the Dharma is the most severe, very serious. We may say, as a practitioner, how can we engage in slandering the Dharma? Alas, as for slandering the Dharma, it only applies to practitioners. Other people who do not understand Buddha Dharma will not engage in this deed! You will slowly, gradually, easily see it. There are many admonishments among the different schools – Mahayana claims Hinayana is not right, Hinayana claims Buddha did not teach Mahayana. Then I say that I am right and he is wrong. If he is wrong, why did Buddha teach it? Now you say he is wrong, but that is what Buddha taught – is it saying that Buddha is wrong? This is very clear. Thus, upon proper understanding of this point, the fault of slandering will not happen. Because of your proper understanding of the first three qualities [A.B.C. on v1 p45], naturally [you] will not engage in slandering. Thus “great wrongdoing” will be automatically refrained! How wonderful!

[5A, 26.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 144 L10]

As for the true intent, we will explore it step by step. And then, among these four qualities, there is one special principle, let us take a look. Now we are truly inspired to apply Buddha Dharma, what is the purpose? It is to attain Buddhahood. Let's put it simply, to allow us to appropriately and instantly understand it. This is to thoroughly resolve all of my suffering and to completely fulfill all merits, this is the intent. What will it take? It takes the entirety of sublime teachings. Now, this text taught us the first point – right, your purpose, the methods to achieve it, etc. In it, it completely covers everything without any flaws. It is all-inclusive, but where do you start? Let's see... alas, this sutra is not right, that one is wrong. Then, just like what was mentioned earlier, many schools say that the sutra is not needed, are they contradicting each other? Well, not only are sutras all-inclusive, but also all sutras are the best guidance for our immediate application, these scriptures are your best guidance. Although it is the best guidance, but if you explore it on your own, you will not be able to thoroughly understand, cannot penetrate, and can't know it thoroughly!

[5B, 00.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 147 L1]

Therefore, the sutras taught us, "If Dharma is not taught, even wise ones will not be able to understand it." It says, "if it is not taught" – even with wisdom, you won't be able to "comprehend" properly. This wisdom refers to the conventional level. Even if you are endowed with Dharma wisdom carried over from previous lives, it still needs to be initiated. In fact, the same applies to worldly matters; without being taught what an airplane or a ship is, etc. When we see a flying object in the sky, we see it ... wow, "this is weird!" Once, there was a joke, it was said that people built the first

railway in China, where was it built? It was between Shanghai and Wusongkou (吴淞口). After the railway was built, the officer of the Imperial Observatory looked at the skies said...Ah! There was a constellation appeared in the sky, which resulted in national turmoil. What was the constellation? It was named the centipede-spirit. People kept searching for a long time, found out that the railway was the centipede-spirit, and then tore it down and threw it into the Sea of Japan. How absurd!

[5B, 01.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 147 L8]

Now, well [seeing something], this is very nice! In fact, when you see something for the first time, you truly do not know what it is. Without people telling you, you won't know, [this happens for] simple worldly things; this is easy to understand, right? This is very, very clear and easy to understand. Thus, people tell a joke, to say nothing of the science and technology that you are unable to fathom. There are too many things in our daily lives [that we cannot understand]. Once, I heard an interesting joke about a northerner who travelled to the south. It was known that the fruits in the south were very good, very tasty. For instance, I will randomly take two examples: bananas and sugarcane. What was the response of this northerner? "This sugarcane tastes pretty good, while the bagasse [sugar cane fiber] is hard to swallow." Is the bagasse there for you to swallow? Sugarcane is very tasty, but the bagasse is truly hard to swallow. A lack of awareness leads to this joke, this was actually what happened! Say you watch others take a banana, peel it, and eat the fruit inside. If you take the fact of removing the peel to eat the fruit, when you apply it to kumquats [a small, sour citrus fruit], and peel it to eat the fruit, that will not work! To eat a kumquat, you eat the peel and not the pulp, right? Alas, this is how worldly things go!

[5B, 02.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 148 L10]

Thus, we need to understand that worldly things are such, not to mention the more profound aspects! The same applies to Buddha's teaching, even if it is written in the text for you to read, you may spend great effort without necessarily grasping the true meaning. With the guidance of a virtuous teacher, well, you get it. So not only are all scriptures revealing to you the best approach to practice, through a virtuous teacher, this text specifically tells you, you will quickly understand it. After this realization, [the author] doesn't mention that you will immediately receive merits, what did he say? Those endless wrongdoings will immediately be stopped. Once you refrain from wrongdoing, then merits will be accumulated! What is your purpose? It is this goal. What is our objective? To remove all suffering and attain all merits, right? So these four qualities are very clear, very obvious in revealing the benefit of Lamrim – is this what you folks are looking for? Yes, to me this is truly what I want!

[5B, 03.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 149 L3]

Let's take a look at the content. By looking into the content, [we will] step through to study and learn from it. This is further divided into three parts. The aforementioned topic covered the overall guideline, and now [we will] review the highlights of the outline. Upon reviewing the outline, it is immediately followed with detailed study and how to apply [the teaching]. Now, let's look at the text:

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[5B, 04.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 149 L6]

A. The greatness of enabling one to know that all of the teachings are free of contradiction

This is the first benefit of this text:

[5B, 04.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 149 L8]
With regard to the teachings, Avalokitavrata's
Commentary on the "Lamp for Wisdom" (Prajna-
pradipa-tika) says:

Concerning "teachings," the scriptures of the Bhagavan
accurately teach that which is to be thoroughly known,
that which is to be eliminated, that which is to be
manifested, and that which is to be cultivated by deities
and humans who wish to attain the ambrosial state [of a
nonabiding nirvana].

Sages' teachings, the teachings from great beings, what are they? [The author] quoted the teachings to show us. Why is he constantly quoting from other texts? Because the meaning of the sutra usually is not easy for us to clearly grasp. So, with the explanation of the commentaries, these commentaries aim toward the intended content with great clarity. Hence, commentaries are also called "texts on knowledge" [v.1 chapter 6 p.111 l.9], aimed at the contents of the teaching to purify our afflictions, this is [how it works]. This *Lamp for Wisdom* is - I just wrote on the board, composed by Venerable Bhavyaviveka (清辨論師), it explains the Middle Way. There are several good books explaining the Middle Way; later, when we are studying "vipasyana" [insight, realizing emptiness] at end of this text [v. 3], study it closely. We often say Middle Way, Middle Way, which explains Madhyamaka; [the *Lamp for Wisdom*] also is one of the main commentaries. And this Venerable Bhavyaviveka (清辨論師) came after Bodhisattva Nagarjuna (龍樹菩薩), which is about a little after Asanga (無著) and Vasubandhu (世親). He is one of the great masters of the Madhyamaka teachings.

[5B, 06.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 150 L5]

What is his teaching here? It reveals that the sublime teachings are delivering flawless perceptions. What perceptions are they delivering? The perceptions can resolve the issue of our cyclic existence. He then says, “Humans who wish to attain the ambrosial state [of a nonabiding nirvana].” The ambrosial state is the most extraordinary state. Why is it called ambrosial? Ambrosia is the deathless medicine, it is heavenly; it was said that, upon taking it, aging will not arise and all illness will be eliminated, just like that. Thus, it is called ambrosia. Here, it is to express that we are amid cyclic existence, and the physical form represents all kinds of suffering: birth, aging, sickness, and death. Actually, the real issue is within the mind! So if we do not resolve the issue from the mind, the physical issue will not be resolved either. Therefore, Buddha Dharma is now like the ambrosia, it is capable of thoroughly resolving these issues, and then [we can be] totally liberated from samsara [cyclic existence]. Once cyclic existence is taken care of, that is truly the most extraordinary state.

[5B, 07.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 150 L13]

For those who wish to attain this mind state [of nonabiding nirvana], those people - why does it say that they are followed by “deities and humans?” We realize that living beings exist throughout the six realms [of cyclic existence], and why not mention living beings of all six realms, but single out humans and deities? It is because to truly practice Buddha Dharma, Bodhisattvas are those who already have achieved a certain level of attainment [they return] with their aspiration to [help us in] the six realms, we will not discuss them. In the beginning of our practice, the Dharma is only applicable to humans and deities. Others in the six realms: asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell

beings are unable [to practice], they lack the capability. Although Buddha Dharma has spread around the world, it is of no use to these beings. Thus, only beings in the human and deity realms are endowed with this capability, so that is what it means here. Therefore, he [the author] explained one concept, and what is its content? That was [the advantage of having the capability to apply the teaching - explained above], that is it. With this understanding, you should be able to thoroughly resolve it [to attain nonabiding nirvana].

[5B, 08.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 151 L5]

This is what Buddha is telling us. Next, there are four aspects: “that which is to be thoroughly known, that which is to be eliminated, that which is to be manifested, and that which is to be cultivated.” This “thoroughly,” in fact, applies to all four statements. This is to say, that which is to be thoroughly known, that which is to be thoroughly eliminated, that which is to be thoroughly manifested, and that which is to be thoroughly cultivated. Essentially, the thoroughly known, then thoroughly eliminated, thoroughly manifested, and thoroughly cultivated are the four Noble Truths that the Buddha taught – suffering, origin of suffering, cessation of suffering, and the path to cessation. This is suffering that you should know, this is the origin of suffering that you should eliminate, this is the cessation you should manifest, and this is the path you should cultivate. What is the meaning of these four? Let me briefly explain. Now, didn’t you experience the suffering in this world? [Do you] intend to eliminate them? Then this is the sign of true suffering. Before this recognition of yours, you will have no way to eliminate them. For instance, we are going to remove the weeds, what do the weeds look like? If you don’t know, how can you remove them? At least you should recognize them in order to remove them. So, now, someone is harming me,

who is harming me? You have to find that person – it is the same here! So, for the true suffering, you have to identify it.

[5B, 10.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 151L14]

Maybe people will say, “How could you not recognize suffering?” Pardon, but, in general, we ordinary beings just don’t recognize true suffering! To be precise, we do not recognize the origin of suffering. You always probe on the nonessentials, so the more fumbling there is, the further away you get. This is its root cause, the origin of the cause. Actually, in our world, no one is an exception, everyone wishes to eliminate suffering and obtain happiness. Yet, due to a lack of true understanding of the real nature of suffering, you always deal with it on an ad hoc basis, this is wrong. Therefore, we need to clearly identify [the origin of suffering].

[5B, 10.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 152 L4]

Perhaps we are not too clear yet – let’s apply a random example! For instance, I am trying to engage in a task that relies on others. It turns out that one of the others is a swindler, a foe. If you rely on him, trust him, will you hope to get things done well? The more you try, the worse it gets! This applies to all worldly things, isn’t it obvious? So you must realize, by now you ... I just mentioned that I want to do a good job, to do away with my foe. Yet, you end up relying on this foe, aren’t you confused? This is very clear. So, frankly speaking, we do not recognize suffering and now we consider it as happiness. Thus, we engage in more suffering, just like that. So to simplify it, where is the origin of suffering – if you recognize it and eliminate it, you are an arhat. If it can be totally and thoroughly resolved, that is Buddha.

[5B, 11.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 152 L12]

So what is this trying to tell us here? It is [trying to tell us about] total fulfillment, therefore [the phrase] “to be thoroughly,” is a general understanding. Upon understanding this suffering, at that time you recognize it and say, “Ah! Now I recognize you, next I will remove this suffering.” Then, it depends on whether or not this suffering can be removed. If it [the suffering] occurs naturally, then you cannot do anything about it. You probably don’t need to waste the unjustified hardship [to remove it], it is unnecessary! Now, look into it, can suffering be removed? The teaching says, well, it can! For all things in this world have their own causes and effects, certain cause leads to the corresponding effect. If you can eliminate that certain cause, then the effect will not appear. Now, you are going to remove this suffering, what is its cause? This is [what Dharma] taught. So, as long as you can remove the cause of suffering, this suffering is automatically resolved. Furthermore, since you want to remove suffering, thus, sever its cause. This is the second [of the four Noble Truths], “that which is to be thoroughly eliminated.” Similarly, it has to be thoroughly removed, thoroughly remove the cause; the issue [of suffering] will naturally be settled!

[5B, 13.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 153 L6]

So we usually describe one incident, it is useless for us to “stir the soup to stop it from boiling;” it must be instead, “withdraw the fuel from the boiling cauldron.” How is this explained? When you open the lid of the pot, the water is boiling hot and you add some hot water to it, it is of no use! Adding more [hot] water will only increase the boiling. So what should you do? You don’t add water to the pot; rather you go to the side of the stove and take away the fire underneath the pot. Without the fire, the water will gradually, gradually cool down. Why? What is the cause of boiling water? The fire underneath it! You removed the cause; once

it is removed, that's enough. Now what is the reason for the suffering? It is the cause of suffering, which is the cause that created the suffering. There is a special term called the origin of suffering. Once the cause of suffering is completely removed, that should do [away with suffering]. So this is the second one, "that which is to be thoroughly eliminated."

[5B, 14.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 153L13]

What happens after elimination? Well, under that condition, suffering is totally settled. The author did not mention happiness – once suffering is alleviated, naturally, [we] will become happy! Why is that sutras usually do not refer to happiness, especially during the beginning stages of the Hinayana? This is because the happiness for us ordinary beings actually is suffering, but we do not recognize it. So we spend a long time telling you the concept so you focus on suffering, recognize suffering, and mindfully remove it. If Buddha in the sutras reinforces happiness again, you will unconsciously be reminded of happiness. Moreover, the worldly happiness: gluttony, playing, clothing, and having fun – to you, it never ends. So, for beginners, Buddha does not discuss this happiness, it has to be suffering. So later, when [Buddha taught] the Mahayana, he then mentions that [happiness] has [its specific] meaning. Thus, we have to understand that the systematic order of Buddha's arrangement has its importance. So, first [Buddha] taught suffering, origin, cessation, and path, then taught impermanence, happiness, selflessness, and purity. What is this all about? This is [to guide] you to the ultimate mind state, which is our aspiration and what you truly need. But to reach it, you have to apply experiential efforts. So it says, "that which is to be thoroughly manifested" – it has to be thoroughly complete. Lack of thoroughness or fulfillment – [the achievement will be] arhat or pratyekabuddha; the thorough and fulfilled is

Buddha. So this is your goal, what should be done?
Practice! This is the final [truth] of the “path,” also known as the path to cessation.

[5B, 15.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 154 L10]

Similarly, the differences between Maha and Hina are here, the lesser and greater vehicles’ differences are here. So Tian-tai lineage [focused on studying the *Lotus Sutra*] was established from this. For example, the four Noble Truths in Hinayana are known as the four truths of arising and perishing and, further, there are four truths of no arising, four immeasurable truths, and four background function truths*. The same four Noble Truths, there are different levels of profoundness and extensiveness; this point will be discussed later in more detail. Overall, the entire teachings from Buddha are nothing but these aspects; they just differ in degree of profoundness. Next, it will explain:

[Note: four background function truths: in teachings about the precepts, there is a type of deed (無作戒體) where, once we engage in the deed, the residual effect will continue to function in the background.]

[5B, 16.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 154 L14]
Thus the teachings are what the Conqueror explained well.

Well, these are the most complete teachings that Buddha taught, they are without any omission and include all of the delicate and encompassing content of all of the teachings by Buddha. “Bhagavan” is Sanskrit, its true meaning has been translated into six words that I wrote on the board for your reference: unrestrained, splendid, dignified, named, auspicious, and venerable. These are recorded in the *Buddhabhumi-sutra* in great detail; usually, we just use one of them - worldly venerated, which is

venerable, the last one. This is the meaning of “Bhagavan.” In our ten [Chinese] names for Buddha, isn’t the last one Buddha the worldly venerated? This is about the name. Often our respectful name regards Buddha as the Bhagavan, or just Bhagavan. This is with regard to: what are the sublime teachings? Let’s move on:

[5B, 17.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 155 L7]
Here, [in the context of the Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment] to know that all the teachings are free of contradiction means to understand that they are the path by which one person becomes a Buddha.

What does it mean by “the teachings are free of contradiction?” To thoroughly understand all these teachings, [we] should know that they are all of the principles for an ordinary being to attain Buddhahood. “Pudgala” is also Sanskrit, which is translated into Chinese as “one who is subject to reincarnation.” It means circling endlessly within the six realms [of cyclic existence]. In other words, the majority of us living beings – humans, various kinds of labels, different names – now we simply say, just one human, one living being. If you want... as far as these terms, generally [you] don’t need to ask too many questions; if you are serious about learning, you should refer to the dictionary more frequently to get the concept ahead of time. Thus, when we gradually delve into the teachings, upon encountering key terms, I’ll explain them in detail. If you can review ahead of time by looking the words up in the dictionary, then when I mention it, you will be able to recognize the meaning immediately and obtain proper understanding.

[5B, 18.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 156 L1]

Here, I will specifically mention: do not take these words at face value; this is because we have not yet

obtained the complete teachings. This is due to our own karmic force, so we may well be in the midst of fallacy. Once we have the actual attainment of the complete teaching, each one of the terms corresponds to a specific Dharma characteristic, to best explain the Dharma characteristic directly. So when you refer to the term, your understanding of the Dharma is very clear. The Dharma we are discussing now is our physical and mental suffering, this is it. You will be able to recognize it, that's the one! Thus, there are great benefits to studying the teachings! Based on this reason, I encourage you all, to earnestly apply effort [to studying]. By then, when you face any arising affliction or engage in practicing the teachings, etc., you will have the feeling of: Ah, how wonderful! It will not be the same as the old routine – [my] previous latent propensities will gradually be completely eliminated. Continuing:

[5B, 19.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 156 L9]
Some are the main points of the path; some are the various branches of the path.

There are so many variations, why do we need [to know] so much to practice? Well! The reason is very simple. Some [teachings] are its trunk, and others are its branches. Just like a tree, the foundation is the root. Above the root is the trunk and on it there are a few major branches, which then offshoot some smaller branches. They then bear tiny twigs, followed by leaves, flowers, and fruits, this is it! The entire thing is perfectly fulfilled! The same applies to the Buddha Dharma we are studying; it has its proper order. That is why there are so many variations. Therefore, we use the same reasoning as the basis; the same can be applied to all worldly phenomena with no exception, without exception. Such is with a tree, our study, anything we do – eating, etc. – everything has its order. For instance, our

meals: actually, a meal is not just rice – there are vegetables, too. Once you have rice and vegetables, sorry, but it will not work without a bowl, this is very clear! There are no exceptions to what is primary, what is secondary. This concept also works in Buddha Dharma. Continue: **[5B, 21.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 157L5] Bodhisattvas make it their goal to accomplish the good of the world [all living beings]. Since bodhisattvas must take care of students who are followers of all three lineages [those of sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas], they must train in the paths of those three lineages.**

Now we already have an understanding of our current recognition to truthfully apply Buddha Dharma to practice. Whether you are willing or not, his [the author's] final word is that we must advance on this path. These words seem somewhat unfamiliar to us in the very beginning – why does it say, “whether you are willing or not?” It should be rephrased as: upon proper understanding, no one will be unwilling [to stop], [if] you have been told not to [apply the teaching], and you will disagree. Why? Very simple – eliminate suffering, do away with suffering! Thus, Buddha told us: “since, without suffering, there is no determination to be free.” Before our understanding, it is true that we only want to pursue our own desires. Once you understand more, this concept will be transformed. What is the reason that we engage in these [activities to attain happiness] and are not willing to work on that [elimination of suffering]? It is because you are seeking your own happiness and do not want to be inconvenienced. If, one day, you understand this effect, not only will it not bring you happiness, but it also gives you great trouble. No one will want to get involved; nobody will want to have any part of it.

[5B, 22.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 158 L1]

Let me use a simple example to illustrate. For instance, I am going to America. Then, how [do I] go about it? Going to America takes an airplane flight, I need to fly there. Wow! The ticket will cost a lot, it also needs this and that, now I will just walk to make it easier! Upon this thought, the airfare will cost a couple thousand dollars; if I walk, it is free – I shall do that! Of course, if you don't have the big picture, sure! This [walking] saves a lot of trouble! Then, you start to sprint; after running for half a day, you go through great hardship and arrive at Tai-tung [eastern Taiwan, facing] the vast body of water, unable to cross it! Then, you stop, but you have to continue [knowing the benefit and determined to move on] – this is its fundamental cause [the inability to stop]. Why do we say that you are unable to stop from running? You will find out that this place is the burning house of the three realms [desire, form, and formless], this is the true intention of Buddha Dharma. Once you have a genuine understanding of Buddha Dharma's true intent, the final effect will naturally be produced [proper attainment of each stage]. I will not go into detail and I will not cover it here! As for this question [how to advance], it has been widely discussed in the *Lotus Sutra*, later it will be clear to us.

[Note: Please refer to tape 3A for *Lotus Sutra* chapter 3 story of the burning mansion.]

[5B, 23.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 158 L10]

In general, we will set it [the *Lotus Sutra*] aside, there are many who do not want to take the Bodhisattva path. We will not insist, well, well, well, instead of taking the Bodhisattva path, take the sravaka or pratyekabuddha path! If you do not even take the sravaka or pratyekabuddha paths, the human or deity paths are good, too – even if you don't take the human or deity path, it is fine, too! One way or another, the teaching is guiding me this way. However, the

key is that [Buddha] actually laid down the complete teachings here; he is not ignoring the other [paths]. For this reason, he is totally fulfilled from top to bottom. So, here it reveals to us, what is the sincere pursuit of total completeness? Those who apply perfect Buddha Dharma are called Bodhisattvas, what do they need to do? Their aspiration is to achieve worldly benefit, all meaningful things in the world.

[5B, 24.37; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 159 L2]

Here, we Mahayana practitioners should form the proper concept from the very beginning. Bodhisattvas help people wherever [they can], why? We might use the simplest way to motivate ourselves – while helping others, my own Pure Land is established, and it is just that simple, that simple! You might as well take the worldly businessman for example, they help others in any way they can – you want a car, he will move it from the Yu-lon [a Taiwanese car maker] factory in Taipei; you need a product from America, he imports it from America; you need German products, he ships them from Germany. Why does he bother to work so hard to get all these for you? To make a profit! Just like that, right? And [for the worldly businessman] there is no exception. Once we have true recognition of the proper method to apply Buddha Dharma in the very beginning, the profit we have in mind is not worldly; it is Dharma wealth. Upon this proper understanding, you will engage in it with great joy, very joyfully! It will not be discussed further here.

[5B, 25.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 159 L10]

So this is what we should know, the Mahayana practitioner is inspired for the ultimate solution. This practitioner also begins from the first step as a worldly being and advances from there. For the sake of this solution, [when facing] worldly objects, [I'm] sorry to say, this

practitioner is not able to claim, “This is the way I am, my way...” No, there are all sorts of tendencies that arise; they are summarized in the three types of persons. This is the so-called three levels of faculties – their [respective] scopes will be covered next: small, medium, and great – these three scopes. In order for you to help others, you need to have the concept [of each of the scopes]. Otherwise, how can you help? So the Mahayana practitioner’s learning needs to cover all of it.

[5B, 26.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 160 L1]
For, as Nagarjuna’s *Essay on the Spirit of Enlightenment (Bodhicitta-vivarana)* says:

**Because they engender in others
Certain knowledge that accords with their own,
The wise apply themselves
Always and without mistake.**

This Lamrim teaches us, for us or for anyone else, that we ourselves must aspire to help others, inspire others, and support others. With this determination, here we must know the beings we are to inspire and the method with which to inspire them; we must have flawless recognition of [proper direction and method]. So the “wise” refers to those Bodhisattvas. They constantly, always, behave with a Bodhisattva’s manner, with a Bodhisattva’s aspiration, and nothing else – he is totally focused on benefiting sentient beings, benefiting all living beings, and working in the interest of all living beings. Of course it can be put in this way: his entire mindful purpose is to cultivate this pure land, even after achieving Buddhahood. And he definitely is flawless, because, for you to achieve this goal, although you have good intention, it is useless if there are flaws. It will not work! So his sense of direction toward the “virtuous destination” is very precise and without any mistakes. Next is

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**[6A, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 163 L1]
And Dharmakirti's Commentary on the "Compendium of Valid Cognition" (Pramaṇa-varttika-karika) says:**

Pramaṇa-varttika-karika is the *Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition*. There are two statements below,

**[6A, 00.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 163 L2]
It is difficult to explain to others
The results of causes that are obscure to oneself.**

[6A, 00.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 163 L4]

In the *Commentary on the Compendium of Valid Cognition*, a verse actually contains four phrases, four phrases in a verse. It says, "In order to destroy suffering, the compassionate work at actualizing the methods. [v2 p.86] It is difficult to explain to others the results of causes that are obscure to oneself." For a sincere Bodhisattva - a Bodhisattva possesses compassion - for the sake of helping self and others, for the cause of destroying afflictive suffering, he [this practitioner] strives diligently and applies earnestly using various proper methods, correct approaches. So why do you want to study this approach? Because you must attain the experience before you can help others, to support others, then [you will be able] to inspire them and allow them to understand how to study, this is how it works. Therefore, they are inspired to recognize Buddha Dharma through these various reasons, these causes, these methods. If you lack the understanding yourself, there is no way that you can express them clearly. This is because these reasons, these causes, are not easy to understand. These causes are not readily recognizable by us.

[6A, 01.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 164 L4]

So what are these reasons? For example, pointing out to you that this is suffering, with an explanation that it is before our eyes, but we are barely able to understand it. As for the origin of suffering, the causes of suffering, then we are not able to identify it, we are unable to see it. Because it is not immediately in front of us, therefore “it is difficult to explain to others.” Well! This [origin of suffering] is hard to identify, it is dependent-arising. Here, everyone says that it is the result of cause-and-effect, yet how did the cause lead to the effect? How does the karmic deed generate its effect? It is not something easy for us to see. Thus, under this condition, for you to help others, you have to have the experience and recognize [the cause] immediately. In this state, it is not possible for you to explain it clearly, no way to clarify if that is reality. So, there are various approaches or methods to study Buddha Dharma, whether it is the arising recognition of the methods to learn Buddhism or the reasoning – they are the causes. The cause can be very profound, generally hard to recognize and explain. You must wait until you have proper recognition, proper experience and attainment, then you can express it explicitly, so, “It is difficult to explain to others”.

[6A, 03.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 164 L14]

Speaking of these two verses, I have to specify because they [the quotes] are from the *Commentary on the “Compendium of Valid Cognition,”* which was composed by Dharmakirti. We have copies of it here too - it is hard to understand, you can take a look at it. Most of us, speaking for myself, open it, well; we do not know what it is talking about! Once you take a look at it, you will know, its brilliance is extremely excellent. We know that the Six Great

Philosophers of Jambudvīpa (南閻浮提六莊嚴), [two out of the six] that is: Dinnaga and Dharmakīrti were two great commentators - two great scholars. Their excellence was applying conventional logic - scholastic knowledge - by permeating the Dharma, and transforming it into a vital curriculum in Buddha Dharma. That is, they utilize worldly reasoning to express common worldly misconceptions and to establish accurate Dharma. [These two scholars] are remarkable, exceptional indeed! Based on this [the background of these two scholars], the content they covered was not wasted for even a bit nor did they permit a single mistake. Thus, the usage of the words was absolutely succinct.

[南閻浮提六莊嚴: the six great scholars of the Jambudvīpa - middle way scholars Nagarjuna and Aryadeva; mind only scholars Asanga and Vasubandhu; Buddhism logic Dinnaga and Dharmakīrti]

[6A, 04.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 165 L7]

Let me write down the two words of “absolutely succinct” (簡鍊). “Absolutely” here means clear or concise, I wrote it here. And then, for “succinct,” should it have the components of gold or fire [Chinese character]? It should be gold, right? One component is gold, “succinct.” It means straightforward, yet it does not mean careless, it is with precision; all but the essence of a product that has been revised through hard work. Thus, for every word and even every phrase or verse, the embedded meanings are very profound and deep. This commentary is difficult to learn, however - once you mastered it, your perception can be transformed exquisitely. By applying the simplest method to include even the smallest detail, it allows us to be elevated to an absolutely perfect state in our short lifespan. We

should not be too anxious - as long as we follow the teachings step-by-step, the future attainment will arise. Otherwise, [we may] waste majority of the time and understand nothing, squandering this entire lifetime without any achievement. I just bring it up here. So it explains the following:

[6A, 05.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 166 L1]
English LR v.1 p.47

Therefore, if you have not ascertained something exactly, you cannot teach it to others.

This has just been explained. Well, now we will continue to the next paragraph, the next one:

[6A, 06.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 166 L3]
By stating “Those benefactors of beings who accomplish the good of the world through the knowledge of paths...”

When a Bodhisattva requests [teachings], his goal is to act for beings of various faculties; thus, he has to study everything. Then, the content of his study is also divided into levels. They are the three vehicles, sravaka and so on – those with sravaka, pratyekabuddha, or Bodhisattva propensities. This is because each inclined propensity has its own conforming path, which is what we usually called path or level. This is the path-of-meditation, which are the skillful methods that Bodhisattvas should master. Method means skillful approach. As for this method [of skillful means in teaching or anything we engage in], now we mistook its meaning for the sake of convenience. What does it mean? It is to take the shortcut. Alas, this is awful, very terrible [to take the short cut]! The method referred to in the Buddha Dharma is a path of proper approaches that leads you to the place you want to reach. Below, it says,

[6A, 07.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 166 L11]
Ajita indicates in *The Ornament for Clear Knowledge* that knowing the paths of the three vehicles is the method for bodhisattvas to achieve the goal they have set.

Ajita is Maitreya Bodhisattva, the Bodhisattva Maitreya. This is quoted from the *Ornament for Clear Knowledge*. As this is what Maitreya Bodhisattva taught, sometimes it will either quote from the commentary or directly mention what the Bodhisattva said [in the Lamrim text]. In order to benefit all beings, what should the approach be? It is through perfection-of-wisdom. There are three requirements that the Bodhisattvas seek: wisdom of emptiness, perfection of wisdom, and omniscience. So, we will explain each one of these and its respective content here. What is the perfection-of-wisdom? The perfection of wisdom is to use this wisdom, this proper recognition, to achieve, attain, and fulfill all worldly benefits. As for all worldly benefits, to all others, it is to aid all beings; once you have aided all beings, for yourself, you have achieved your own Sambhogakaya [enlightened physical form] and enlightened state-of-mind; they are the two sides of the same object [both conventional and ultimate achievements].

[6A, 08.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 167 L6]

We will again use the businessman example that was mentioned earlier, you [as the businessman] gained benefit from the business, he [the supplier] delivered things that you need, to your hands for your use; consequently, [the supplier] makes a profit at the same time. These are not two different matters. So now, when we apply Buddha Dharma, we should start from the same approach. Why do I use this common example? It is for us to understand immediately, wow, this is how Buddha Dharma works, and the effect [for us students] is greater. Otherwise, when we are doing little

service, you feel unwilling to do it for others. You have to realize that the true benefit is yours! The more benefit there is for others, the more you gain - just like a businessman, when everyone owns your products; you become the most successful business-owner.

[6A, 09.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 167 L13]

The same applies to us now. Otherwise, we do a little bit and feel that it is enough, and we are unable to accept any unjust treatment. You should know that, unless you do nothing, to engage in any task is to face injustice; this is the first note. Moreover, it is only under the feeling of being wronged that things get accomplished; this is the characteristic of Buddha Dharma! Let's all think about it, right? It would be nice to just lie there comfortably without feeling wronged. And then you work hard to serve others' meals, when they finished eating, they may not feel good and even complain that it is tasteless or salty, not greasy enough or too greasy. That is the way it is; it is absolutely true. This is why, in the six perfections, each perfection builds on the previous one. Generosity is easier, ethical discipline is hard. Ethical discipline may be possible, while patience is difficult. What is the object for true forbearance? It is certitude-about-the-teachings. [v.2 p.152] If you are able to achieve that level of forbearance, then you are equipped to consider compassion and joyous perseverance. Upon this achievement, then achieving meditative stabilization becomes possible, followed by achieving wisdom insight - this is what we should understand. This is the same with the case of the businessman - just like in business, the customers are picky! If you are not able to satisfy their pickiness, when they come to buy things from your store, you will say, "Take it or leave it that is the way I am!" This

customer will certainly not return again, and you will not make money after all of your hard work.

[6A, 11.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 168 L9]

Thus, to seriously apply the Mahayana teachings, that is how extraordinary this Lamrim is. Let me tell you, Lamrim does not present the greatness of Mahayana right away or reveal the content to you, it is not like that. First, it tells us what the benefits are that you need to apply, the disadvantages if you don't apply them, and it immediately analyzes the pros and cons thoroughly. Once you recognize the advantages and disadvantages, you will think, "I want to apply it, what now?" Then Lamrim will reveal to you, beginning from the very first step, how to gradually increase your capability. To increase your capability enables you to realize the benefits, and it also allows you to realize that, upon removing the disadvantages, the capability will increase; your learning through experience deepens and, gradually, you advance [on the path], and then you will achieve it! That is how it works. So, this is the most extraordinary and excellent advantage of Lamrim! Once you continue with the study, [you will] surely understand how it differs from other [texts]. Now, let's continue.

[6A, 12.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 169 L1]

Also the Mother of Conquerors [The Eighteen-Thousand-Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sutra] says:

The Mother of Conquerors is the Wisdom of Perfection. It did not specify which *Wisdom of Perfection* here. I am not sure which one it is, the text here did not specify, what does it say?

[6A, 12.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 169 L4]

Bodhisattvas should produce all paths – whatever is a path of a Sravaka, a pratyekabuddha, or a buddha – and

should know all paths. They should also perform the deeds of these paths and bring all of them to completion.

In fact, *The Mother of Conquerors* is the *Wisdom of Perfection Sutras*, this need to be verified because the *Wisdom of Perfection Sutras* is divided into several volumes. The first volume is the most extensive, the second is more concise, the third is further condensed, and the fourth is even more condensed. The principle contents are the same and the core teachings are all in one. However, the most important thing is that some are more elaborate; the most detailed one is volume one, like that. Therefore, whether it is volume one, two, three, or four, the essence is the same. It states that a Bodhisattva should generate the aspiration. With this generated spirit, apply it to all aspects of study and actual deeds, and, based on this aspiration, learn how to apply it. So what are the categories? In general, there are three parts: *sravaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and Buddha, which are the three vehicles that we had mentioned earlier. “They should also perform the deeds of these paths and bring all of them to completion.” Those listed above [*sravaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and Buddha] should all be fulfilled, totally perfected. Why did he [Buddha] say this? This is because the *Wisdom of Perfection Sutras* was compiled after *the Agamas* 《阿含》. *The Agamas* is focused on individual liberation, just so. At the end, you are told to consider liberating yourself, actually there is more work needed - to advance a step further - before you gradually reach completion. Prior to your ultimate perfection, these [aspiration and deeds] are all required. And then all the requirements need to be perfected.

[6A, 14.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 170 L3]

Thus, it is contradictory to propound that you should not train in the scriptural collections of the Hinayana because you are a Mahayana practitioner.

So why did Lama Tsong-kha-pa say this here? This is due to many people who, at that time, said, “I practice Mahayana, and I will not study those Hinayana texts.” This is wrong, this is not right! So the Sutra taught us this, in fact it is clear in its reasoning – for Mahayana to be Maha [great] is to help resolve all beings’ issues. In order to solve their issues, you need to know where their problems are. If you don’t know, how are you going to solve it? Thus, there is no exception to greater or lesser [vehicle]. So, if anyone says, “I am Mahayana practitioner, I don’t need to learn Hinayana teachings,” this is wrong and contradictory. This is why it says below that someone stated: a Mahayana practitioner should not study the lesser vehicle – the lesser vehicle refers to what is relatively inferior as compared to the great, which means small vehicle. This is wrong. This is the cause of contradiction.

[6A, 15.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 170 L11]

In addition, there is something unusual here. Generally, in Chinese culture we will say that this is unreasonable or contradictory. Why did he say “the cause of contradiction” instead? We should know that when we sincerely apply the Buddha Dharma, one [part] is to plant some roots, like sketching a diagram and drawing a draft. It is okay just to have a general concept anyway. To go a step further, when you actually engage in practice, it requires great care without any flaws. Thus, at the time for serious practice, anything [we] engage in must distinguish between cause and effect, or the dependent-arising of karma, or the middle-way. A certain cause results in its corresponding effect; in other words, if you want such an effect, you must plant such

a cause. Now, assuming that the stated Mahayana [practitioner] does not study Hinayana teachings, you planted a wrong cause and this is a mistake. This is why it uses the word “cause” of contradiction here. Please note! There are many areas that we need pay attention to, and the reason I specifically mention them here is because I made this mistake before. Some people said that this book is hard to understand, and I felt the same way. So, I foolishly relied on my thoughts, felt that many of the writings were not fluent enough and made changes. To this day, I still repent for doing so.

[6A, 16.58; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 171 L7]

So I will specifically mention this here to you; subsequently, you should be able to apply according to various conditions. Now, we often argue with others, saying that I am reasonable and others are not. Excuse me! Our reasons as ordinary beings applied to other ordinary beings is fine, you may win a court case by arguing this way. However, in the context of Buddha Dharma, you will go to the hell realms, this is the cause. This is a very important concept! Therefore, I just bring it up here. Continue, now we move forward.

[6A, 17.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 171 L12]

There are shared and unshared paths to enter the Mahayana. Since the shared are those things that come from the scriptural collections of the Hinayana, how could they be something set aside? Therefore, Mahayana followers must practice all those things taught in the Hinayana scriptural collections, with only a few exceptions, such as diligently seeking a blissful peace for oneself alone. This is the reason for

extensively teaching all three vehicles in the very vast scriptural collections of the bodhisattvas.

For those of us truly applying Mahayana teachings, there are two paths to travel: one is called the shared path and the other is the unshared path. Shared means to share in common; unshared means not shared with others. Shared with whom? [It is] shared with Hinayana or the lesser vehicle. What about the other path? It is not traveled by the Hinayana, the lesser vehicle sravakas, or pratyekabuddhas; it is only taken by Bodhisattvas, which is known as unshared. It is like our schooling, we are in college now, the elementary school is shared with the elementary students; by the time we are ready for college, those elementary students may not continue. That is the path unshared by the college students, this is what it means. As for us [monastics], yes, we are part of the worldly beings, so it is common to share with the worldly. But with these robes on, as a monastic, that is our unshared part, it is the same reasoning. As for us now, the content of applying the teaching is the same, “the shared are those things that come from the scriptural collections of the Hinayana,” and the common part is the foundation. That is what sravakas and pratyekabuddhas are also studying, we need to learn it too; and this is the shared. Adding on this foundation is the unshared; for the sake of your greater aim, your foundation needs to be established to be more profound and vast, this is the difference. This kind of foundation is essential.

[6A, 19.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 172 L11]

So under this circumstance, yes, although they are shared, Mahayana and Hinayana indeed have differences in some areas. There are Mahayana precepts that are not included in Hinayana ethical discipline, this part is unshared. Not only are they unshared, but also the part shared with

Hinayana is exactly the opposite, and these [differences] become complicated*. Thus, what has to be adopted in Hinayana, Mahayana has to cast aside; contrarily, what is adopted or required by Mahayana, Hinayana should cast aside. So what is the reasoning for this, what is the cause? It is distinguished here. With this understanding, later, with regard to the differences between Mahayana and Hinayana, and when to adopt and cast aside what, becomes clear between the Southern and Northern Buddhism lineages, very clear. This is stated very clearly in the Bodhisattva precepts and the *Brahmajala Sutra* 《梵網經》. In the *Brahmajala Sutra*, the Bodhisattva precepts were clearly defined in a sequential order. It says that now we are Mahayana Bodhisattva practitioners, how should we engage [in the practice]? To engage in these, there are six perfections. So, it lists precepts for the perfection of generosity, which precepts are for the perfection of ethical discipline, in this way. Then, these are followed by the perfection of patience, the perfection of joyous perseverance, the perfection of meditative stabilization, and the perfection of wisdom; what should be adopted and what should be avoided.

[Note: There were cases that Buddha in his previous lives he had to kill villain to prevent harms done to other beings including the villain from more non-virtuous deeds. This is not allowed in Hinayana practice.]

[6A, 20.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 173 L6]

In the sutras of discipline, it taught us that a sravaka practitioner is eager to renounce and, for the sake of renunciation, there are various things that he should avoid. What are the things that he should do? Lessen involvement, lessen activity, and abide in less desire. You [the sravaka] disregard everything except filling the stomach with food,

regardless of the taste or nutrition. What is the best nutrition? It is your spirit. Once you can purify the mind, it will be fine to even discard the physical form, nothing should be a bother. For the Mahayana practitioner, it is not the case! You want to rescue all beings, want to free all of them; thus, [you] need to conform to their propensities. When that time comes, you cannot leave them alone. Thus, the sutras of discipline taught us that sravaka practitioners are eager to benefit the self, so they have as little involvement, activity, or desire as possible, which are the right things to do! In order for a Mahayana practitioner to free others, it is wrong if you have as little involvement, activity, and desires as possible, then you are wrong! You are to free others, the more the better. Your goal is to rescue all beings in the infinite Dharma-realm and throughout the entire universe. Now, [with the attitude of] this is not involved and that is not involved, how are you going to free them? This is the fundamental difference between the two.

[6A, 21.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 174 L1]

Up to here, there is one point that needs to be differentiated. In the Sutra, the systematic order of each stage is clearly specified, your aspiration is correct – you want to save all beings, but to totally fulfill this aspiration, what do you rely on? Rely on ourselves, each one of us. That is when you need to protect this spirit, increase its potency. Under this condition, it does not mean for you to do it all, it starts from strengthening this mentality. It is like a child who was born as the son of the emperor – he will be the heir to the king, but it does not mean that he will be put on the throne right after he is born, that is not possible! Because he will inherit the throne, the training will be different [from an ordinary civilian], however the process is still the same as an ordinary civilian – gradually increasing his capacity. Yet, his capacity is as a king, while as your

capacity is to make a living, this is the difference. Thus, this is the importance of the systematic order. Once we have this systematic order, then the completion of the quality and quantified-measurement that were determined in the beginning are possible. So, the aforementioned are differences between Mahayana and Hinayana. The detailed differences will be elaborated later.

[6A, 23.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 174 L11]

Even though there is such a difference, the goal is still the same [enlightenment], this is what we ought to be certain of. What is your goal? It is to resolve the suffering of cyclic existence. Hinayana does not see it far enough and consider that the suffering of cyclic existence is just this [individual liberation]. You only pay attention to this and, as a result, [you] find out later, ah! This does not work, he [the enlightened one] still has to thoroughly solve [self and others' enlightenment], and you still have to work for this cause. Since you want to solve the major one [ultimate enlightenment], of course you cannot just scratch the surface – with this understanding, the conflict of precepts between Maha and Hina are only in appearance. In the actual meaning, there is no contradiction. Thus, for us serious practitioners, this is what we should study. Once we have this understanding, then the obstacle will be removed, there is no more hindrance. This understanding is not just a theory, rather it is the conformity level; by then, you will conceive this mental capacity with ease.

[6A, 24.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 175 L4]

I am going to use this example here: we know not only the Mahayana sutra of precepts, but also many other Mahayana scriptures say: for Hinayana practitioners, killing is absolutely not allowed, whereas there are cases when a

Mahayana practitioner kills people! I believe we all know this story; we might as well go over it again. Once, a group of people went to sea to hunt treasure. At that time, a major merchant led the treasure hunt because he was experienced. For instance, if we were to dig treasure, he [the leader] knows what is valuable, how to get to there, what the difficulties will be, and how to resolve them; everyone followed him and proceeded mindfully. When they arrived at the sea, well, on the ship there was a bandit who was plotting to kill for treasure, but no one knew it. This major merchant knew about it and thought, “This is trouble. By keeping the bandit here, he will kill us all, what will you do? Yet you are practitioner of Buddha Dharma, you cannot kill him.” Later, [the merchant] felt that, under this circumstance, if you tolerate [the bandit’s presence], not only would he kill everyone on board, but he would fall to hell if he killed the passengers, he would fall to hell, [his] downfall was certain! Since I have committed to rescue everyone, let me be the one to go to hell; I will kill this bandit. Eventually, he killed the bandit.

[6A, 25.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 176 L1]

We should understand this story; there is a very important point in it. We often say that, as a Mahayana practitioner, I want to benefit others, thus I am willing to be engaged! There is nothing wrong with this, but Buddha Dharma is not about preaching one theory; every teaching clearly has its respective Dharma characteristic. By the time you evaluate yourself, try to measure it. For me to apply the teaching accordingly now, I definitely know it very clearly: jump into the water with open eyes [knowing clearly what I am doing]. At that time, I have to do the jumping myself, and that is when your killing will accumulate great merits. You should not say, “according to the Bodhisattva vows, by killing him I gain merits and advantage” – with this, you are

doomed to fall to hell. For this [concept] in Lamrim, not just in Lamrim, this is stated very explicitly in many scriptures and classical commentaries; [these texts] clearly reveal the Dharma characteristic of the mind, just like that. Thus, this is what we truly need to study, truly need to learn. For those of us who are unable to reach this point but have studied some scriptures, use this as an excuse for self-defense, this is one kind [of mistaken application]. Moreover, upon studying the scriptures, [if] the self-grasping becomes more and more, alas – my Dharma practice is right, his Dharma practice is right – argue to the point the sky and earth turn upside down, then it is wrong! I bring this up along with the topics.

[6A, 26.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 176 L11]

Next, let's see, therefore, in this situation, we know that, apart from this exception, for the sake of self benefit – less involvement, activity, and desire... other than self benefit, [the Mahayana practitioner] needs to study all the Hinayana teachings, needs to learn them all. This is why, in Mahayana, the reference of “complete and extensive treasury” means Mahayana, and in Mahayana it covers the Tripitaka extensively. Theoretically, Mahayana covers Mahayana alone, and does not cover Hinayana, but [Mahayana] also studies Hinayana teachings, this is the reason. For you have to study Hinayana teaching; after learning and understanding, help those [Hinayana practitioners]. By then, you know what the difference is, this is the cause [of why Mahayana needs to study Hinayana], and it is the reason.

[6A, 27.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 177 L2]
Furthermore,

Let's go on,

[6A, 27.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 177 L4]
a perfect buddha has not extinguished just a portion of faults and accomplished a mere portion of good qualities,

What is Buddha? “Precision and pervasion” that is absolutely flawless and absolutely without any omission. “Precision” means valid; “pervasion” means completeness; these are the so-called perfection of enlightenment and ultimate enlightenment – this is Buddha, this is what Buddha is. This enlightenment is what we called peerless, perfect enlightenment. If your attainment is not yet “ultimate”, sravakas may also have the same attainment. So, Buddha’s work is thoroughly flawless, and thoroughly perfected of all good qualities. He is not just eliminating a tiny number of faults and not just accomplishing a tiny number of good qualities.

[6B, 00.04; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 179 L1]
English LR v.1 p.47

Mahayana practitioners seek to achieve this. Since they will then eliminate all faults and develop all good qualities,

What should be practiced at the causal stage? All faults need to be thoroughly eliminated; all good qualities need to be perfectly completed.

[6B, 00.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 179 L3]
all the different types of good qualities derived from the elimination of faults and the acquisition of knowledge within every other vehicle are included in the Mahayana path.

For a true Mahayana [practitioner], if your [learning] is incomplete – missing this and that – how can you be [considered as] Maha [which means big]? Yes, Hinayana [teachings] may not need to include those of the Mahayana,

since I was a lesser vehicle [practitioner] anyway. If you are referring to Mahayana, Maha is all-inclusive and absolutely great; but without the Hinayana [teachings], how do you explain its all-inclusiveness? Mahayana is all-learning, to perfect all good qualities and to eliminate all flaws.

**[6B, 00.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 179 L8]
Therefore, every scripture is included as a branch of the Mahayana path for achieving Buddhahood.**

What is the reason for this? It is because all teachings from Buddha are completely included in the great path to enlightenment; this is very clear, very obvious. Suppose that, in our present study of the Buddha Dharma, I choose to learn this and consider others incorrect – this is my teaching and others [teachings] are wrong. Then you are biased at the causal stage. This is why I repeatedly explain: it is not to say that you should now learn everything at once rather that I [the practitioner] should know that planting seeds at the causal stage is very important. Although my capability has not matured enough now, this is my goal [to study Buddha Dharma in its entirety]; this is the first point. Just because of this goal, there must be a basis for your first step; this first step has to conform to you. At that time, you focus on either Zen meditation or chanting Buddha's name; at the very end, you have to perfect them all, otherwise Buddhahood will not be achieved. You may not achieve it now, thus plant the seeds at this causal stage. On the contrary, if we do not understand this point now, and we reject it at the causal stage, then what seeds are you planting? Alas, hindrance! This is very important. It is our mental activities that leave an imprint on our consciousness; this imprint is a seed that will later develop into action. Thus, with these instructions of genuine, perfect teachings here, does everyone understand?

[6B, 02.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 180 L12]

Thus, for those who focus on chanting Buddha's name, you praise the benefits of Zen meditation or studying the scriptures. For those who engage in Zen meditation, you praise the benefits of chanting Buddha's name, and say, "I will wait to be done with this current practice, up to a certain level, until I perfect it; then I will engage in learning other practices." Once you have perfected [the first practice] then learning new things will come without difficulty. Otherwise, at the time of perfection, your advancement will stop here – is it complete? With an attitude of dislike towards others' approaches to practice, you are unknowingly rejecting them. Lama Tsong-kha-pa will explain this later in more detail. The only purpose of our study of Buddha Dharma is to eradicate beginningless latent propensities, also known as karmic seeds. This is why the activity of our mental actions is very important, a crucial point. This is mentioned at the beginning [that all of the teachings are free of contradiction], it is first mentioned briefly [here]. Thus, the aforementioned [reasoning] is followed by experiential proof.

[6B, 03.14; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 181 L4]
For, there is no saying of the Sage that does not extinguish some fault or develop some good quality,

As for the Buddha, as for him, he had absolutely removed all faults, in other words, he did not retain any flaws. On top of that, Buddha perfected all good qualities; he had absolutely attained all good qualities. Now we want to learn from Buddha, yes, that's right! So, where do we begin? At the causal stage, we should be this way: "Well, I must do it. I will accomplish it in the future." This attitude is very important. Never say, "Alas, not this way, this will not work, no, no!" We should say, "Indeed, it is correct that I am embarrassed for being unable to accomplish it now."

However, I am determined to accomplish it in the future.” Because I will accomplish it in the future, so I will determine and firmly hold on to the initial approach that I should have right now. By then, in your same routine - Zen meditation or chanting of Buddha’s name - the effect will be distinctly different, very different. This is because at the causal stage, you are already mindful of the purpose of chanting Buddha’s name – to follow Amitabha. Thus, you applied it and, naturally, [you] achieved the top level; or, at least once you meet Amitabha, while listening to the teaching you will conform to it, this will definitely be the path for you.

[6B, 04.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 181 L14]

There is another type [of practitioner]: you focus on chanting Buddha’s name and let go of everything else to get there yourself! Once you get there, you will be pleased to hear about the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence of the lesser vehicles, and achieving arhatship, this is how it works. Therefore, we should distinguish clearly here; these [Mahayana and Hinayana] differences are very obvious but are also subtler, more delicate! Later, the key points will be explained. Chanting Buddha’s name is this way, so is the practice of Zen meditation – the same [focus and persistence] applies to everything. Once you comprehend this perception, well, a wonderful reversal [will happen]! Because your ultimate purpose is actually this [achieving perfection in your practice], so whatever you engage in – my chanting of the Buddha’s name is dedicated to a better rebirth, so is everything else I am doing, I dedicate them all to a better rebirth. At that time, your merits will multiply day and night. The time of chanting is called the actual session, the session between is called the conditional session. Then, depart [this life] with certainty and achieve high status. The

same applies to Zen meditation. So, this is the fundamental concept that we need to understand, hold on to this key point. Continuing,

**[6B, 05.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 182 L8]
and, of all those, there is none that a Mahayana practitioner does not practice.**

This we should understand because it has been explained earlier.

[6B, 05.36; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 182 L10]

Qualm:

Some may say, what if people say this,

[6B, 05.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 182 L12]

In order to enter the perfection vehicle of Mahayana, you do need the paths that are explained in the Hinayana scriptural collections. However, in order to enter into the Vajrayana, the paths of the perfection vehicle are not shared in common with the path of the Vajrayana, because the paths are incompatible.

Some may claim: sure, sure, to study the Mahayana teachings, yes, it has to build upon the foundation of Hinayana teachings – it is the shared path. However, for Tantrayana practitioners, those who enter into Vajrayana, that will be a different path, a separate path. “The path of the perfection vehicle” is the path for the Sutrayana, which is not a shared path [with Hinayana]. Why? It is incompatible. The perfection vehicle of Mahayana is to advance gradually step by step. Whereas the Vajrayana is a direct path, moving continuously forward [to Buddhahood]. What does Lama Tsong-kha-pa say next?

[Note: Mahayana has two parts: Sutrayana/perfection vehicle and Tantrayana/Vajrayana]

English LR v.1 p.48

[6B, 06.43; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 183 L6]

Reply: This too is most unreasonable.

That is what Lama Tsong-kha-pa told us: this qualm is absolutely unreasonable, unreasonable! Next, Lama Tsong-kha-pa further elaborates.

[6B, 06.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 183 L8]

The substance of the path of the perfection vehicle comprises

It is saying that you should know that the perfection of wisdom part of Mahayana is “the path of the perfection vehicle.” Its essence is embodied in Vajrayana and, therefore, in Vajrayana, it definitely contains the entire essence of Mahayana. Next,

[6B, 07.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 183 L11]

the *thought* that is the development of the spirit of enlightenment and the *deeds* of training in the six perfections. That those must be relied upon on all occasions

What is the entire essence of this [Mahayana]? There are two parts: what kind of aspiration and how to apply the deeds. The aspiration is called “motivation,” the proper aspiration for Vajrayana – and what is the motivation of Vajrayana? It is the aspiration for Bodhichitta [spirit of enlightenment]. Then, what are the proper “deeds” for Vajrayana? They are to train in the “six perfections.” May [I] ask: are the Vajrayana and Sutrayana the same or different? They are completely the same! Thus, “those must be relied upon on all occasions,” well, so that Vajrayana

practitioners are determined to study both [aspirational and engaged Bodhisattva deeds]! This concept is vital, very important! For those of you sitting here, if you have the opportunity to study Vajrayana in the future, please do remember that without the foundation [of Sutrayana/Perfection vehicle] to discuss Vajrayana, it is only planting future causes [to study it], but this is not enough to actually engage in it!

[6B, 08.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 184 L5]

From another aspect, for other practitioners [those listening to the teaching here, but have not formed the intention to study Vajrayana], helping others is the best practice. Take heed! In India at that time, the crown jewel [of the teachings, the Vajrayana] – the commonly recognized conclusion and also later spread to Tibet with same doctrine – this [altruistic practice] is clearly explained, very clearly distinguished. Once we have this understanding, it becomes our best personal guidance, allows a powerful understanding of Buddha Dharma, and helps to purify [our minds]. This is what we should comprehend. Next, it quotes from the Tantra teaching as a validation that I [Lama Tsongkha-pa] am not the source of this concept; you can see clearly that the origin is from the Tantra scripture, so it says:

[6B, 09.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 184 L10]

**is set forth in the *Vajra Climax Tantra (Vajra-Sikhara)*:
Even to save your life, do not give up the spirit of enlightenment.**

And: The deeds of the six perfections should never be cast aside. Further, such is said in many tantric texts.

The first statement refuted the previous concept, so to establish the main objective: the previous reply is incorrect.

Then, an explanation follows and it ends with the quote from Tantra. Now, you want to discuss it, Lama Tsong-kha-pa quoted from Tantra to clearly point out to you that, even for the sake of your life, you should never give up the spirit of enlightenment. The spirit of enlightenment is Bodhichitta. In other words, it is the “motivation” and is the aspiration. In Vajrayana, the requirement is very rigid. Then what about the deed? It says, “The deeds of the six perfections should never be cast aside.” What should be applied in [our] deeds? It is this [the six perfections]. Aren’t you discussing Vajrayana? Not just in the scripture of Vajrayana, but also in “many tantric texts,” it is clearly described in other Vajrayana classics! They are all like this. Let us continue,

[6B, 10.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 185 L4]
Such texts also state that on frequent occasions of entering mandalas of highest yoga tantra, you must take both the shared and the unshared tantric vows.

So now with our proper understanding of these perceptions, at the time of application, apply ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom accordingly. Therefore, during the actual session, for those truly practicing the highest yoga tantra – which is the highest state of Tantric training – even the highest state is all the same [requires practicing the order of ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom]. Naturally, the fundamental trainings are indispensable. Here, it says, “mandalas of highest yoga tantra.” “Mandala,” translated into Chinese, is altar city or ritual city. What is the special meaning of it? It is to say, in other words, the place where the Buddha resides, Buddha’s residence. The place we reside is the saha world for ordinary beings, whereas Buddha resides in Pure Land. Actually, Pure Land does not exclude anything and is all-inclusive. However, for us living beings, it is impossible to understand, what we are aware of now is just what our eyes

and ears can experience. Hence, in order to guide us, it still requires all sorts of depictions of concepts and diagrams to plant the seed in our minds. Look, this world of ours is filled with uneven hills and all sorts of wasteful dirt! Wow, whereas now this other place is such a perfect Pure Land. This is the way [to distinguish the difference].

[6B, 11.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 185 L14]

So, when sincerely receiving initiation, it is to say that [the ritual] guides us to enter into Buddha's or your chosen deity's mandala [residence]. At the point of serious study, what should the beginner learn first? It is to take the vows – samaya precepts [of the Tantrayana]. Among the precepts, there are also those that are shared and unshared, those that are shared are fundamental. So, what is shared? It is the Bodhisattva vows!

[6B, 12.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 186 L3]
The former are simply the vows of a bodhisattva, and taking the vows means promising to apply yourself to the trainings of a bodhisattva, such as the three forms of ethical discipline.

And what is in the vows? It has to start from the bottom, so the three forms of ethical discipline are also the trainings of Bodhisattvas; it all starts from the basic step-by-step advancement to gradually include all [trainings]. It begins from the shared monastic vows, followed by the Bodhisattva vows, and then step-by-step advancement.

[6B, 13.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 186 L7]
Therefore, the perfection vehicle has no path other than the trainings that accord with your promise to practice the bodhisattva deeds after developing the spirit of enlightenment.

Other than this aspiration, which was the aforementioned awakening thought, this is absolutely shared [by both Sutrayana and Tantrayana] and absolutely cannot be omitted. Furthermore, once you advance with this aspiration, you have to learn “other than the trainings that accord with your promise to practice the Bodhisattva deeds” on top of the Bodhisattva deeds that you must advance step by step. These are the same as Paramita [perfection of wisdom], there are no other options. Thus, this is specifically aimed at what was said before, “Ah, Tantrayana teachings are different from Sutrayana teachings!” Yes, the unshared part is different, but the shared part is absolutely identical. In fact, not just the prominent teachings, May [I] ask, in the [Chinese] eight Mahayana sects, is chanting Buddha’s name shared with Zen meditation? Sorry, but he - the practitioner - recites Amitabha earnestly, whereas the Zen practitioner needs to let go of everything, right! Certainly when tracing who is mindful of the Buddha, there is at least the thought of Buddha’s name. There are many others [Zen practices], “all belongs to the one—where does the one belong?”, and even all kinds of varieties [of approaches to spiritual practice], are they all different? It does not matter, for the foundation is shared, all [Mahayana practitioners] yearn for the aspiration of spirit of enlightenment and perfect Buddhahood, and apply the same six perfections. The difference is the sublime approach; this is what we should understand.

**[6B, 14.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 187 L4]
Moreover, the above qualm is most unreasonable because you must promise to uphold all aspects of the teaching when you take the tantric vow. This is in accordance with what is said in the *Diamond Daka Tantra (Vajra-ḍaka)*, *Integration Tantra (Saṃpuṭi)*, and**

Vajra Climax Tantra on the occasion of taking the pledges of Amitabha:

Uphold all of the excellent teachings:

The three vehicles, the external, and the secret.

This quote is from the esoteric teachings, from Tantric scriptures. Here, when you take the teaching via initiation from Amitabha, study this Dharma and rely on [Amitabha] as the worshiping object; when you engage in the practice, the first step is to take the vow. So, when taking the tantric vows – which are known as “samaya” – “in accordance with what is stated in the vows,” at that time, you vow to “uphold all of the excellent teachings.” Not just abiding by the esoteric teaching...no, there is not one bit missing. You should take [vows] from all three vehicles, and, on top of the foundation of the three vehicles, enhance your unshared part [the Tantric vows]. Therefore,

[6B, 15.38; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 187 L12]

When you are serious about taking the tantric samaya precepts, all the preceding foundations are required, none of them should be omitted – in other words, not to leave any of them out. Let’s review the previously mentioned concept – the aim of sravakas is to benefit the self: reduce involvements, activities, and desires, which is correct. While Mahayana [practitioners] acts for the sake of benefiting others, this is not encouraged [by sravakas]. Although they are contradictory, the ultimate goal is still the same. With this understanding, then the contradiction is solved and there is nothing to be contended. Also, with this same understanding, what naturally takes place is: even if there is no contention, it does not mean that we apply exactly the same practice. On the contrary, you engage in your way and I have mine! Everyone coordinates in seamless harmony. You chant your Buddha’s name, grasping on the chanting

for fear of losing it, while I meditate on my Zen, which is to let go everything for fear of any attachment, yet the conformity is perfect. In the same way, apply the same reasoning to our present time, and you will be endowed with this strength to work [on your practice]; I will have my strength to focus [on my practice]. You do not have to listen to me for everything; this [attitude of listening to me] will be automatically removed. When you want [others] to obey you, that is the sign of being submerged in the self-centered affliction, you are fooled by it. Now let's continue:

[6B, 17.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 188 L9]
Some see a slight discrepancy in terms of what you are and are not to do and conclude that these are in complete contradiction, like hot and cold. Obviously, this is a cursory assessment.

Based on the previously mentioned reasoning, there is little discrepancy, just a tiny discrepancy [in the approach] – you feel that both [chanting and meditation] are totally opposite. Just like one is cold and the other hot. When it is cold, it is certainly not hot. When it is hot, it must not be cold. They are totally opposite. If you consider this difference as a total contradiction, then it is obvious that we are ignorant! Our wisdom is too shallow and coarse. So, here, feel embarrassed and strive hard with diligence for self-improvement.

[6B, 17.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 189 L1]
Apart from certain points about what is or is not to be done, the scriptures are very much in agreement. Therefore, upon entering the higher levels of the three vehicles or the five paths, for instance, you must have all the good qualities of the lower vehicles and paths.

From our previous understanding, other than some minor exceptions, there is a small difference – what to adopt

and what should be avoided, what ought to be guarded against. Therefore, besides this, what Buddha said mutually agrees and accords to each other. So, in order to actually “enter the higher levels of the three vehicles or the five paths,” we have to be among the three vehicles and five paths – the three vehicles are namely Sravaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Bodhisattva. The five paths are the supramundane Buddha Dharma which is divided into five paths: path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation, and path of no more learning. Hinayana has its own five paths, while Mahayana has its own five paths. Here, it specifically refers to the higher levels; the highest level has to begin from “all the good qualities of the lower vehicles and paths.” This has to be perfected without any omission.

[6B, 19.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 189 L10]

With regard to the path of the perfections, the Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines (Ratna-guṇa-sañcaya-gatha) says:

This is the same as the previously mentioned *Mother of Conquerors; the Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* is the “*Wisdom of Perfection Sutras*.”

[6B, 19.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 189 L12]

**The path of all the conquerors of the past,
Of those who have not come, and of those now
present
is the perfections, nothing else.**

All the Buddhas of the past, future, and present are all the same without any exception, no exception, they all have to take this path – which is the six perfections.

[6B, 19.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 190 L2]
The path of the perfections is like the center post for the path that leads to Buddhahood. Hence, it is unsuitable to cast it aside.

It is the “center post” – other things can be left out a bit, but the “center post” absolutely cannot be omitted.

[6B, 19.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 190 L4]
As this is said many times even in the Vajrayana, the path of the perfections is the path common to both sūtra and tantra.

And this also applies to Vajrayana in every aspect. [The path of perfection] is shared by both the prominent and esoteric teachings.

[6B, 20.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 190 L6]
By adding to this shared path the unshared paths of the mantra vehicle – initiations, pledges, vows, the two stages, and their attendant practices – progress to buddhahood is rapid.

So, in both the prominent and esoteric approaches – the shared part – enhance them with various unshared esoteric practice. The unshared practices are referred to as practices of “initiation, samaya, vows, the two stages, and their attendant,” and this is the sequential order of application. The first is to receive initiations for your physical and mental maturation, followed by taking the esoteric samaya pledges. While applying the [esoteric] teachings, there is the stage of generation and the stage of completion [v.1 chapter 1 p.40] as well as various related key practices. Due to your application of various special sublime teachings, the achievement of Buddhahood can be attained speedily.

[6B, 20.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 190 L13]

For instance, if we go to America, you can take a boat or you can also take an airplane. There used to be propeller planes, but now there are jet planes; someday, in the future, maybe we can travel in a rocket. The more special and the faster it is, the more dangerous it is. When we take a walk, a bump or fall won't be too serious. Just get up, pat off the dirt and continue on – it is nothing serious, at the most there is some scraped skin. In the case of riding a bicycle, injury may occur; driving may cause accidents – as for taking a plane, sorry, death is certain to come! It is clearly specified in the Vajrayana, getting to know [the Vajrayana teaching] is fine, but if you are serious about applying it, [Guru Rinpoche] Padmasambhava said clearly, “This Dharma of mine is like a snake in a bamboo tube, it is either up or down – up is to become a Buddha or fall down to the Vajra hell.” Vajra hell is also known as the avici hell. Don't think, well, this esoteric method I have now is easy to practice, very sorry! To get acquainted is fine; you are not going too far with it. Once you get seriously involved, there will only be two paths, this we should know. Because [the esoteric] approach is indeed excellent, with this understanding, we should never slander it. This is a reminder in passing.

[6B, 22.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 191 L10]

However, if you cast aside the paths shared with the perfection vehicle, you make a great mistake.

If you give up the shared path, you are completely wrong!

[6B, 22.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 191 L12]

If you do not gain such understanding, then, each time you gain what seems to be an understanding of an isolated teaching, you will abandon other teachings.

This is very troublesome, quite troublesome. If you lack the understanding of the previous concept, not recognizing, not comprehending, and you think “I am right” and slander others, this is wrong! Especially what? “Each time you gain what seems to be an understanding of one particular teaching [removed from context],” this is our most common mistake. Before you practice, in the beginning, even though it has some contradictions, you can still maintain respect toward Buddhism. Once you are involved in application, have applied some and attained some experience, ah, you feel ... or have some attainment from Zen meditation, or chanting Buddha’s name with some taste of it, and then you start criticizing others, just like that. That is known as “the semblance of understanding.” Once you have true, complete understanding, you never, absolutely won’t [slander others]. Now, this [attitude] is too common, from the very beginning prior to application - here we go, [I have] studied some practices and consider that my rite is so appropriate, yours is not. This is the same [erroneous] reasoning.

[6B, 23.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 192 L7]

In fact, our world is rather the same way, right? Everyone has his or her own habits and opinions. Holding on to ones’ opinion or habit, and claiming, “I am right and you are wrong” – this is how worldly contention starts. Now, our purpose is to study Buddha Dharma, we should recognize it right from here – begin to identify this. In the mundane world, everyone slanders each other, the worst is to quarrel and stop interacting with each other, which is fine! Provided that, after the quarrel, worst comes to worst, the most that happens is a court case. In Buddhism, it does not

work this way. The deeper you go, the more serious retribution will arise in the future. Now, we can hardly have enough time for purification, your other issues may be minor, but to slander Buddha Dharma is extremely serious.

[6B, 24.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 192 L13]

Remember! It is said very clearly in the *Lotus Sutra*, that Buddha, for the sake of delivering all sentient beings, taught various Dharma teachings, and all these teachings were from his thorough understanding. Do you realize how much arduous effort he devoted to realize these teachings - immeasurable eons forsaking his heads, eyes, and brains. This precious teaching, once in your hands, you criticize it here and there. May [I] ask, will you be able to have the same enlightenment? Once we have this understanding, we absolutely would not dare to open our mouths! This is especially for those of us beginners that consider all others to be incorrect. Well, this is a great worry of mine because I was once like that.

[6B, 24.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 193 L4]

I started from chanting Buddha's name – that was when I ignored everything else. When hearing others' disapproval of chanting, if they said any more, I could hardly wait to tear their scriptures and burn them, that was the attitude! Now, I am always repenting for it, so I specifically want to share this painful experience with you. Due to this cause, if you do not sever it [the wrong attitude of slandering other's practice], not only you will not be able to go [to Pure Land], even if you make it, once there, the seed will reappear and that will be the time when you will experience tremendous hardships while applying the teaching. So, by the experience of great teachers, we often express it as the

“dependent manifestation,” 大權示現 going through all sorts of sufferings. He did not mean to intentionally experience the suffering! His attainment is already up to certain level, but the seed embedded at the causal stage is there, this we should recognize. Because we lack the understanding of the Dharma characteristics, we think that he did it intentionally, deliberately pretended. This cannot be pretended, if he lacks the cause, the effect will never arise; this will be covered later.

[Note: 大權示現 Dependent manifestation: signs manifested by Sages to effectively guide beings in need of help]

[6B, 25.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 193 L12]

Therefore, we should understand this now, the [negative] seed at your causal stage, before it grows, purify it. Nevertheless, does the previously mentioned “dependent manifestation” make any sense? It may make absolute sense – once you have developed the spirit of enlightenment, it [the wrong seed] will not be a concern. Because you slandered before, because you disapproved of it before, at the time when obstructions arise, you will be in the circle with those pertinent beings – that is the time you are to save them. This is where the true...the genuine value is. So once you have developed the spirit of enlightenment, you become fearless; with this mentality, gradually, you will gradually be able to help those pertinent beings in the circle. This is the true meaning of “dependent manifestation” that we need to know.

[For example: when a reformed bully trying to help other bullies in the group.]

[6B, 26.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 194 L3]

Next, with regard to karma, once you recognized this concept, we will then grasp the true meaning of “dependent manifestation.” Otherwise, it would seem to us that “dependent manifestation” is fooling us. No, it is not. It has its related cause and effect; it has its true value. Before we attain these qualifications, we better not try; what would I rather do? Just like the youthful Sudhana, who achieved in one attempt, then I can widely foster this karmic condition at that time. Wouldn’t it be better this way? However, everyone has his or her own will; either method [Sudhana’s or “dependent manifestation”] is good, either is correct. So, next it says,

[6B, 27.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 194 L9]
When you develop a supposed interest in the higher vehicles, you will abandon in succession the scriptural collections of the Hinayana and the perfection vehicle.

There are fewer Hinayana practitioners slandering Mahayana, but there are still some! Especially for Mahayana, the higher they go, well, it is interesting! They “develop a resemblance of interest,” provided that he does not have any understanding at all, which is fine. However, if he has some understanding, some application of the teaching, then it is considered a “resemblance of interest;” it is apparently right but actually wrong. Under these circumstances, he feels that all others are wrong and he himself is the best. The slander “in succession” will abandon those [shared practices].

[6B, 27.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 194 L14]
Even within the mantra vehicle

Even having achieved the highest of the esoteric practice,

[6B, 27.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 195 L2]
you will abandon the three lower tantras and the like.

Because the esoteric teaching has four tantra instructions, in total the four of them are: Kriya, Carya, Yoga, and Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantras. He [the practitioner with the slandering attitude] would consider that Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra as the highest and abandon the lower ones.

***Stop Here for Qing Zhao new assignment**

***Start Here for Qing Zhao original assignment**

[6B, 28.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 195 L5]
Thus, you will accumulate the great karmic obstruction of having abandoned the teachings, which has a very grave fruition. In this context, this obstruction readily arises and is in danger of doing so. The source for this is indicated below.

If you do so, then, you have committed the most serious, very grave transgression of slandering the sublime teachings.

English LR v.1 p.49

[7A, 00.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 199 L1]

Thus, the Sutras taught us: if you commit the five deeds of immediate retribution [v1 p.389 #195], the Bodhisattvas are able to rescue you. But if you slander the teachings, then there is nothing that can help you. This horrible infraction is frequently mentioned in the Mahayana Sutras. Moreover, this infraction, well, it arises extremely easy! It arises easily, spontaneously, it is right there. And what is this [tendency]? It comes from seeming to understand – what appears to be right is actually wrong. The more books you read, and then you get a little bit of experience with practice, all these tendencies will arise. So we say, “Well, then the books are not needed!” you are wrong again –

reading is needed! Recognize the completeness of the teachings, and then you advance properly step by step. May [I] ask: for a practitioner who read some [Buddhism] text – to slander [the authors] is not permissible - yet if you don't even read these [Buddhism] books then slander [the authors]; do you have the right to do so? Does it make sense? Thus, some may say, "Well, the cause of [slander] is from reading wrong [Buddhism] texts! No, I won't read them, for they are wrong!" You are also committing slander. To study Buddha Dharma, you must have the sequential order of: study, reflection, and practice. Now you cut the previous statement with one chop, [the mistake] is the same. Therefore, we need to truly grasp the key question, it will be covered later in the text in great detail with a reliable source – they all have credible sources.

[7A, 01.19; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 200 L1]

Please turn to [page 49] of *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. Yesterday, we already covered the difference between the Mahayana and Hinayana in Buddha Dharma, there was already an explanation. In here there is slight variation, because right now each person's approach to application is different. Some exceptions are permitted and even should be applied, while some should be prevented, not allowed. This is from the perspective of differences we see now. As for the ultimate effect, the same [whether it is allowed or not] applies, this we have to understand. As for this concept, we may lack proper understanding and, during the course of the application, we become unable to grasp the key points of the entire practice, which is the entirety of Buddha Dharma: its stages, steps, and so forth. As a result, on this path we choose or possibly through the understanding of the theory or a little bit of experiential attainment, we very likely will form something that resembles understanding. Furthermore,

enhanced by various misleading evidence from other sources, we develop the semblance of determination, also called “superficial understanding.”

[7A, 03.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 200 L10]

There are several different interpretations for thorough understanding, the most common explanation we use is from the *Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-Only*: it says that, with regard to what I know – the perceived object – as my concept, feeling certain about it, that it has to be this way, unshakeable by any other perceptions – this is considered thorough understanding. For example, in this current world in front of us, we often feel, “Well, this thing is nutritious.” No matter what others say, this is my view; however many reasons others give, my perception is unshakable, just like that. Thus, through the course of our application of Buddha Dharma, I believe that each one of us more or less has experienced that my way is correct; I consider it this way, anything else is incorrect. This is often known as the resemblance of thorough understanding. Due to this concept, one will thus develop rejection, slandering the ones he does not conform to, which produces very grave transgressions of abandoning the teachings. With regard to this misdeed of abandoning the teachings, it will be discussed gradually later on. Now, what should we do? Thus, the above perception is vital to our practice at the present stage. Turn to the [fourth paragraph on page 49] in the text.

[7A, 04.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 201 L5]

Therefore, having relied upon an excellent protector, solidify your certainty about the way that all the scriptures are causal factors for one person to become a Buddha.

There are two parts here, the first part: if we are serious about learning Buddha Dharma – those endowed with virtuous roots – what should we do? Rely on a virtuous teacher, a qualified teacher. As for the qualifications of the virtuous teacher and how to rely on him or her, it will be covered later in great detail. This is to indicate how to rely on a teacher – being recipients of the teachings and what are the defining characteristics of the virtuous teacher. This is the most important thing to recognize for us beginners and required for practitioners. If you properly abide by this, then all the potential issues will be solved. Otherwise, it will be a path of running around in a circle, a big circle, a big roundabout. Even though, eventually, we will certainly be there! [Buddha] already declared to us in the *Lotus Sutra*: even your “palms together and a slight nod have paved the Buddha path.” Therefore, “people with scattered minds, entering stupas or temples, with one chant of Namō Buddha, they have paved their path to Buddhahood.” Those with scattered minds, like us, by chance walk into a temple, seeing the Buddha and exclaim, “Oh! Namō Buddha!” Or “Namō Amitabha Buddha” or “Namō Fundamental Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha” will all have the same effect of eventually attaining Buddhahood.

[7A, 07.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 202 L3]

Here, I only quoted one verse – actually, it contains many teachings. Let’s use the case of a child playing in the mud. If he builds something like a monastery, well, he will attain Buddhahood by this cause. Not to mention that we

are so diligent now, forsaking our cozy families to come here to practice so earnestly, so Buddhahood can certainly be achieved. However, this path is a long one. During the course of circling on this remote path, without proper planning, the majority of the time will be spent in the miserable realms; it is very dreadful, very horrible!

[7A, 07.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 202 L8]

So what is the crucial point? It relies on whether we can understand how to be a disciple of Buddha Dharma, as well as whether or not we can find a virtuous teacher to rely on. Thus, in the Sutras from the *Agamas* all the way to the *Array of Stalks Sutra*, apparently, in all the Sutras, it is easy to find references of Buddha's instruction on the importance of a virtuous teacher. There is a story in the *Agamas*: one day, when Ananda was in the midst of meditation, contemplating the Buddha Dharma, he thought, "Buddha often exhorts the importance of a virtuous teacher, this is absolutely right; without a virtuous teacher, it is impossible for us to understand [the teaching properly]." Thus, he ran to Buddha and asked, "Dear Buddha! You are the honorable elder who often teaches us the importance of a virtuous teacher. I thought about it and totally agree, so I consider that the majority, the majority of our practice relies on the virtuous teacher!" Buddha's reply was very eaningful, "Ananda, you are wrong." "Well, how so?" Buddha said, "Not the majority – it entirely relies upon a virtuous teacher!" "Oh! Totally rely [on a virtuous teacher]." This is based on the Hinayana [teaching in *Agamas*]!

[7A, 09.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 203 L1]

[With the foundation of the Hinayana training,] then enter into the Mahayana. Although there are many scriptures, now we are taking the *Array of Stalks Sutra* as a representative [scripture]; or you may contemplate on it, for

it was introduced in many other scriptures. Bodhisattva Manjusri time and again set forth such teachings to youthful Sudhana. Youthful Sudhana tirelessly visited virtuous teachers and, everywhere [he went], those virtuous teachers repeatedly taught him, “Achieving Buddhahood requires the attainment of omniscient wisdom, always rely upon virtuous teachers.” These details will be covered later, in later chapters. This is our first step of applying the Buddha Dharma.

[7A, 09.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 203 L6]

Immediately afterward, what is most important in relying on virtuous teacher? That is, we have to hold on to the entire study of Buddha Dharma – the entirety, key points, and the sequence of stages. Hence, “solidify your certainty about the way that all the scriptures are causal factors for one person to become a Buddha.” This was discussed in detail yesterday, covered in detail. With regard to the distinctions [of relying on virtuous teachers], let’s go over it briefly. Yes! I can follow any path now; I claim that I like scriptural study, great! You prefer Zen meditation, fine! You are chanting Buddha's name, nice! Even in the Nichiren school (日蓮宗) of Japan, they only recite – “*Namo Lotus Sutra*.” The True Pure Land School (淨土真宗) doesn’t even chant, but relies on one word - “faith.” As for the [Chinese] Zen Meditation School (禪宗), it focuses on tracing the meaning of “nothingness.” That is the situation [of the 8 Buddhism schools in China], which is fine. However, these aforementioned paths take longer, they are a longer journey. Without the proper approach, much unnecessary hardship will arise, and it will even cause the fragmentation of our current teachings as a whole. From the viewpoint of other lineages, mutually rejecting each other, this practice

eventually will bring what effect to us – the same result: you become awkwardly disagreeable here and there.

[7A, 11.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 204 L1]

Why say these? Because we eventually have to attain peerless enlightenment (圓滿無上菩提), May [I] ask, can you accomplish it with any speck of imperfection? Can you leave any single part unaccomplished? Can you penetrate extensive-deeds without profound-view? Can you penetrate the Mahayana without the Hinayana? Will they be perfect? Obviously [not]! Hence, at the time of your actual practice, yes, you are on the chosen path; however, that teaching did not conform to you, then your conflicts arise within. Take our present situation for example: many of us chant Buddha's name or Zen meditation, now we are told to study the scriptural knowledge, the discomfort will arise within. "Alas! This doesn't work. I chant Buddha's name, now I am told to devote my effort to practice this [learning the scripture – Lamrim]!" You will naturally feel this sort of incompatible feeling. Why? It is due to the obstacle planted at our causal stage.

[7A, 12.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 204 L8]

I also mentioned yesterday, [I am] not saying that you should not apply Zen meditation, or not chant Buddha's name, or not study scripture. On the contrary, this encompassing Buddha Dharma [Lamrim] provides the best approach to chant Buddha's name, the best method for Zen meditation, and the best way to study the scripture. The difference is that you don't need to delve in hastily, rather, get a hold of the key focus, find your starting point, and then engage to take the path. For the same effect and the same starting point, this is the quickest, shortest, and best path! Based on this, you understand that, eventually, we have to

learn all of these teachings; the difference is in the systematic approach and the complete course of the path. You must have an affirmed and unshakable understanding of this concept [before taking the journey]. Now, to continue...

[7A, 13.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 204 L14]

Then practice those things that you can practice now.

Due to your understanding of the entire contents of the Buddha Dharma, you will know what to apply during the complete course of study. Then, how far have I gone on the path? What are the areas that have not been covered? With this kind of recognition, you will not waste effort on the path and you will not fall behind. For example, now you want to study the complete [curriculum] from kindergarten up to college. Later, you find out, well, you don't need kindergarten, you can skip it. You even [think that you] can do away with elementary school and just join a class in the middle of the school year. However, if you lack the proper prerequisites, you may say, "Well, he did it this way." Then, you try to join the class in the middle too; you will not be able to keep up. By that time, due to not being able to keep up, you have to start all over and go through a great deal of fruitless hardships. Thus, based on the two points mentioned above – [1. Rely on virtuous teachers, 2. Understand the entire framework of the teachings] -, find your present starting point, which means the available approach, and then set off from here. Under this condition, what is next?

[7A, 14.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 205 L9]

Do not use your own incapacity as a reason to repudiate what you cannot actually engage in or turn away from.

There are other aspects that we are not ready to seriously apply. “Engage in or turn away from” means to apply what is appropriate and shun what is not proper; we refer to it as “proscriptive, and prescriptive” (止、作). The so-called proscriptive and prescriptive terms mean that, while upholding ethical discipline, there are many things that you normally wouldn’t do [but] you have to. Normally, our habit is being used to doing something, based on the discipline of what Buddha teaches us to refrain from engaging in, I apply it to transform my latent habit. The former worldly habits increase our secular wealth, which lead to cyclic existence. While abiding by Buddha Dharma, at first you will feel uneasy and awkward. However, that is exactly where you need to adjust your behavior. Why is it called practice? It is to mend your previous action! The previous actions are contaminated, now, through this adjustment, it becomes corrected. Let’s take a random example, wow! The table in front of you, you feel that something is wrong with it, and you want to sand it with a plane or chop it with an axe. As for the table, if it is like us, of course it will hurt when chopped – physical forms will feel pain and psychologically feel unwell, this is certain.

[7A, 15.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 206 L6]

Thus, I often say, I sincerely received my lifelong benefit from an earlier teacher, now I feel unable to thank him enough in this lifetime. In the first few years, whenever [I started to] speak, everything about it was wrong; but I appreciate [him] wholeheartedly, for he reformed my secular habit. This is how Buddha Dharma truly works, but it requires the reliance of virtuous teacher! For an ordinary being to reform you, you two will turn into bitter enemies, it is very troublesome, and this we need to distinguish very clearly. Therefore, later, with regard to the conditions

between virtuous teacher and studious student, we have to recognize them.

[7A, 16.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 206 L11]

This is to say, with regard to our inability to fully act prescriptively or proscriptively, what should we do at this juncture? In most cases, we ignore it, even toss it away – these are pretty bad reactions. Why toss it away? From our frequent experience, sure, I am Zen practitioner, you chant Buddha’s name – this practice is grandpa’s and grandma’s practice. As for those who study scripture, he [the Zen practitioner] considers them to be blindly applying the teaching; whereas practitioners have been considered as mere talkers. These situations are very commonly seen at the present time. In fact, do they act this way? Suppose your assumptions are right, why did Buddha exhort all those teachings? Wouldn’t that make Buddha the first one to start the contention, the first one to bring up the jest? This is very clear. Therefore, we should know, at that time [facing prescriptive or proscriptive situations] we should understand, oh well, I lack sufficient prerequisites now, I start by entering [the teaching] from this area and other approaches are not available for now. Never forsake it due to your current lack of capacity! The next statement means: should not take the incapacity to pursue it now – pursue means to go – as a reason to abandon [the teaching], what should be done?

[7A, 17.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 207 L5]
Rather, think with anticipation, “When will I practice these teachings by actually doing what should be done and turning away from what should not be done?”

At that time, I will be thinking in my mind, “Alas! I wish, when the time comes, that I can earnestly endeavor in those tasks that I am not able to now, when the time is right for

[me to] endeavor earnestly.” Why say this? Please look at the board. The systematic order is very important; to those of you at this stage, it is very important! First, rely on virtuous teachers; the primary one is “rely on virtuous Teachers.” Second, when actually relying on virtuous teachers, you must have skillful means, which is to very clearly, flawlessly understand the entire Buddha Dharma, its outlines and systematic orders, etc. I divided the essence of the path into three aspects: accuracy in quality, which has to be precise without any flaws; quantitatively sufficient (量圓) – it is not comprehensive with quality alone; sufficient in quantity is also required. Moreover, the systematic order has to be flawless. These have been mentioned before. Going forward, the entire scope and detail will be covered later.

[4 important steps in studying Buddha Dharma:

First: rely on virtuous teachers.

Second: flawless quality, sufficient quantity, and unerring systematic order.]

[7A, 18.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 207 L13]

With this, let’s look at the third aspect – “knowing the entrance” (知入處) – which is the starting point, so we can genuinely deepen [our] learning. Otherwise, it is mere talk. Moreover, “knowing the approach for profound study” (知深進方便) is very crucial for us, of immediate importance to us! May [I] ask: now that we are engaged in the practice, what is your goal? If your goal is coming here to worship the Buddha, it is fine if you worship the Buddha and ignore everything else. If your goal is to chant four or six words [Buddha’s name], and then you just repeat “Amitabha

Buddha” or “Namo Amitabha Buddha,” that will do. Or you are into Zen meditation – that is good. Perhaps now you say, “Not so! My goal is to be reborn [in Pure Land] (求往生).”

Then, you cannot rely on only four words, you need to consider whether these four words will allow your rebirth [in Pure Land]; this is very clear, right? While chanting loudly, the mind is wandering wildly, and you still consider that you will be reborn [in Pure Land]. By then, [you] must know how to improve it; I believe we all can understand this

[Third: knowing the entrance.

Fourth: knowing the approach for profound study.]

[7A, 19.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 208 L7]

Often, people ask, “Well, I do chant Buddha’s name, but the mind is scattered without conformity.” This is a good sign – the indication of our desire for profound study. However, there is a question here – is your ultimate goal to be reborn to Pure Land and be done with it, or do you want to achieve Buddhahood? No! We certainly want to attain Buddhahood. That is when chanting the same Buddha’s name makes a big difference. With such a mentality, you will not be confined by Zen meditation. Or, if you are chanting Buddha’s name, you will not be restrained by the chanting. By the time you reach Pure Land or you attain your enlightenment, or, for those of you studying scripture, achieve thorough comprehension, then what? You still need to advance, isn’t it very obvious?

[7A, 20.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 208 L13]

So this is where we need to clarify. What comes after clarification? Well! It is here – know to study profoundly. Thus, why are we unable to advance? We have obstacles, this is the first [reason]; what else, we lack capability, not

capable enough. So, prior to studying this while we lack the conditions at present, one aspect is study for the accumulation of merits and increase in capacity. Another aspect is to purify obscurations, to gradually increase our ability to advance. During your course of advancement, actually it is similar to your study [in school]. Now you are in the third grade, gradually and gradually, you can advance to the fourth grade, then the fifth. If we don't do it right, it will be like finishing after the third grade, the fourth or fifth grades are not needed; they are not useful, why bother to have them? Upon finishing the third grade, may [I] ask what you will do? By then, it is time to advance, yet you have closed off the path forward: tossed away the upper grade textbooks, and driven out the teachers, squandered all the tuition. May [I] ask what you will do after your education is over? This is one scenario.

[This scenario is if we slander the higher-level teachings.]

[7A, 21.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 209 L7]

So, what kind of situation are we in? We should know the true karma teaching in the Buddha Dharma that we are studying, where is the center [of Buddha Dharma]? This will be discussed later in detail; I will briefly explain it to you now – it is the so-called mindfulness at the present moment. The karma part of this mindfulness (心念) will be discussed in detail, like what was just mentioned. As for right now, our “mental process of intention” (思心所), we may have the thought within: “Yep! This is what I want. This is what I want.” Subsequently, you will automatically turn toward that direction. If you apply rejection now, when the time comes, this power [of rejection] will arise. Actually, this state does not necessarily have to wait until the next life, we can experience it immediately. For instance, a small incident

happened just now, I will say it this way. Say Mr. Mao and I are having a minor issue, so my mind thinks, “This guy, I, I, I dislike him.” Then, your mind keeps thinking about this. With this mental activity, later you see each other – from afar, you will think, “Avoid [him] if possible.” Otherwise, you will glare at him or even secretly harm him in your mind. Is this very clear? Why react that way when you meet? It is the function of your previous mental activities. Later, the text will discuss this in great detail; our practice is nothing but this!

[7A, 22.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 210 L4]

If you reverse it, you look at: “Well, he just did me a favor. That is very nice of him!” I will find ways, even it is not immediately, to say at least a few words of appreciation. So when I see him from afar, even if he is busy, I will greet him with a smile and say, “Yep, [I] truly appreciate you very much!” Why react this way for the same encounter? It is the state of your mental attitude. With this understanding, normally, when you face a given situation, there must be a certain reaction. May [I] ask does this reaction arise suddenly or is there a pre-planted seed-cause (因種)? The “seed” is [planted at] your causal stage. We should all recognize it, everyone should understand it. Often, our causal seed is affliction; luckily, we advance one giant step to recognize affliction and say, “Alas, there is no need to discriminate with falsehood (虛妄分別)!” When applying Buddha Dharma, at this time, the old habit arises again, for those Zen practitioners who forsake everything else. For those that study scripture to react in the same mistaken way, is this right?

[7A, 23.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 210 L13]

Thus, from here it tells us to never forsake the teachings due to our lack of capacity. What should the proper reaction be? It should be: “The reason I strive diligently in applying the teaching is to advance forward.” So, from the moment I thought about advancing [on the path], that is considered as applying the teaching. Just like our education: now, even though [I am] in elementary school, I am always mindfully thinking, when can I be in high school, when can I be in college, even when can I study abroad. With this [aspirational attitude], then it is proper! Thus, you will advance with earnest efforts and clear away obstacles, as well as accumulate whatever we have now. How do you purify obstructions and accumulate merits? There are three applications that need to be done.

[7A, 24.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 211 L4]
Work at the causes for such practice – accumulating the collections, clearing away obscurations, and making aspirational prayers.

“Work at the causes for such practice.” What are the causes? They are the causes for your future attainment. You apply some at this causal stage now, and, naturally, the effect will mature in the future. If you reject it now, the effect of obstructions will arise in the future. If you apply causes that conform [to the teachings] now, when the time comes, you will advance forward step by step. The reason that you are unable to advance is obscurations, so you “clear away obscurations.” Although the obscurations are cleared away, if you don’t apply sufficient effort, it still will not work. So the other application is “accumulating the collections [blissfulness and wisdom].” Then, what are the dedications and aspirations for? That is, once you have accumulated the collections, what is your purpose? Your purpose is to do this, so you must “make aspirational prayers.” There are similarities and differences between “aspiration” and

“dedication.” That is to say, you are planning to do a thing, preparing to engage in it, so you evaluate why I want to do it, what is my goal. For example, I plan to go to America; I need to buy an airplane ticket. Thus, I have to earn money, what do I need to earn money for – I want to buy an airline ticket. This is the “aspiration” for something that you have not done yet. Once you have worked for the money, you say, “I will not spend this money wastefully; I want to buy an airline ticket.” This is called “dedication.” Therefore, aspiration and dedication are pointing in the [same] direction.

[7A, 25.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 212 L1]

Next, the fourth point is: knowing the approach for profound study. This is what we should sincerely understand; to apply the teaching now, our biggest obstruction is this one, it is very crucial! In my last few lessons, many people did not hear it clearly, they think that I disagree with this or that and Zen meditation or chanting Buddha’s name or studying scripture are all wrong. As a matter of fact, I praised all of them – regardless of whether it was chanting Buddha’s name, Zen meditation, studying scripture – they are all great. The intention is for you to achieve the best, nothing else, and that is it! The crucial point lies here, so I specifically clarify it here. From the scripture:

[7A, 26.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 212 L7]

Before long your mental power will become greater and greater, and you will be able to practice all of the teachings that you were previously unable to practice.

In the end, by doing it this way, then what is next? Oh, great! Wisdom increased so is capacity increased, thus you will be able to practice all of the teachings. So – the deeds are properly applied; the effect will naturally arise, the effect

will certainly arise! Therefore, seriously speaking, to apply the teaching is not difficult. What is difficult – proper guidance, proper perception is hardest to obtain! So the *Array of Stalks Sutra* taught, “There is no difference between aspiration and completion [of the wish], between the two, the initial aspiration is harder [to develop].” From being inspired by the spirit of enlightenment to ultimate attainment of the Buddhahood, both actually have the same content, for the essence is the same [the spirit of enlightenment]. The former has the proper quality, yet lacks complete fulfillment; this is where [the former] falls short. If we apply the same with water, the substance is absolutely the same [quality], the only difference is that the latter is completely fulfilled [quantity], that is all. Or the required measurement is completely achieved, and the quality of the water remains the same.

[Note: here late Master is replacing the content with water, the former which is the initial stage or prior to be fully filled up [aspiration stage]; the latter is completely full or totally achieved the essence of spirit of enlightenment.]

[7B, 00.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 213 L1]

Between these two [aspiration and completion], the actual difficulty is not in attaining ultimate Buddhahood, it is in the initial aspiration. At our present stage, the aspiration of spirit of enlightenment is still far away. Thus, for us now, the highest goal is achieving Buddhahood, but the first step that we take now is the development of the spirit of enlightenment. Hence, our present “short-term” effect is the spirit of enlightenment. Then, may [I] ask, what is the cause of attaining this fruition? This is what is important to us now! If you grasp this point and begin applying your practice hereafter, then you are on the right track! What is truly difficult now is this – correct view. In order to obtain this

correct view, [we need to] find a virtuous teacher and, to find a virtuous teacher, the key is still relying on each individual. It will be discussed in greater detail later. Therefore, I am going over this concept briefly here, mentioning it here. Thus, eventually, “attain the perfect effect of the applied practice” (行果圓滿), is this clear? With even these few statements, once you imprint this key point in your mind, the benefit will be there for the rest of [your] life. The content that will be discussed in detail later is to reveal the key points by their systematic order and fill in proper application one by one. Next:

English LR p.49

**[7B, 01.29; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 214 L1]
The Precious Teacher [Drom-don-ba] said, “My guru [Atisha] is the one who knows how to bring all of the teachings within a four-sided path.” These words are very meaningful.**

Drom-don-ba was one of the primary disciples of the aforementioned Venerable Atisha. Venerable Atisha had many great accomplishments in India and Tibet. However, among his disciples, the only one to uphold Atisha’s teachings in their entirety and inherit Venerable Atisha’s Dharma works was Drom-don-ba – he was the only one. So [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] quoted the following statements from [Drom-don-ba] as a source of support. These words are common to the spoken language at that time in India [Drom-don-ba was a Tibetan but he followed the expression from ancient India teachers]. It is similar to the quotes of Zen masters – if they do not have an explanation, these citations from Zen masters would be hard for you to comprehend, difficult to understand. This is because some are their local dialects and some are their habitual expressions. As for me, I did not receive a complete explanation from [my] teachers,

only the key points. So many of the expressions I am not able to clarify in detail. However, I am able to describe the main idea here.

[7B, 02.46; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 214 L10]

We often cling to our preferences because we are unable to grasp the essence of this perfect path – we don't know the scriptural knowledge, not to mention the experiential attainment from actual application. Now this Venerable Atisha not only thoroughly understood scriptural knowledge, but he also realized it by experiencing [the theoretical knowledge from the scriptures] one by one. Thus, he was able to integrate various sources without any omission – that was my teacher. Thus, my teacher [Drom-don-ba's teacher Atisha] was recognized as the crown jewel among all the virtuous teachers of Tibet and India. Furthermore, [Indian scholars] thought that, if Venerable Atisha were to leave, then the Buddha Dharma in India would be over. This is the reason [for why Atisha is so precious] that we should understand. Therefore, these words are for us to reflect and analyze with understanding, and to take them as the goal of our meditation.

[7B, 03.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 215 L1]
Because these instructions in the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* guide students by gathering all the key points of the sutra and mantra vehicles into the path for one person to become a buddha, they have the greatness of producing the certainty that all of the teachings are free of contradiction.

Based on above reasoning, we know that these “instructions” we have – in other words, this Lamrim – are also based on Venerable Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. It includes all of the essential teachings –

Sutrayana and Mantrayana, Mahayana and Hinayana, Profound-View and Extensive-Deeds – they are completely included. What does this indicate? For any person – which means all living beings – [this teaching provides] all approaches and the most precise guidance to achieve Buddhahood. So these instructions enable us to know all teachings without any contradiction, they are free of contradiction. This is crucial for us to know, very important! Our normal experience is: the forest of sectarians and the strife among Mahayana and Hinayana, Profound-View and Extensive-Deeds, Sutrayana and Mantrayana. All along “the independence between Profound-View and Extensive-Deeds,” (性相角立) is just like the two horns each point to their separate directions, this is very terrible. When Master Xuan-zang (玄奘大師) went to study in India, one of his teachers applied Profound-View to exclude Extensive-Deeds. Later, Venerable Xuan-zang wrote a book called *On the Harmony of the Principles* (會宗記). [It covers] all schools and sects, yes! Among them, there are differences in characteristics and features, but the ultimate essence is that they actually complement each other. The book is very brilliant, I haven't read it but we can imagine it.

[7B, 05.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 215 L13]

Here, I will bring up a story in passing, a story to share with everyone. It is from *The Record of the Western Regions* (西域記). It was in *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (大唐西域記) as well as *The Traditions of Western Countries* (西域傳). It can also be found in *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western*

Regions, which I read before, but I don't remember too much now. I encourage you students to read more books like it. If you have read it, please let me know. Then, what is the story about, let me tell you. There was a great Bodhisattva, Vasubandhu. At first, he studied the Hinayana and rejected, negated the Mahayana. Later, because of the guidance of his older brother Asanga Bodhisattva, he felt so remorseful that he wanted to cut off his tongue. His brother said, "It is useless to cut off your tongue. Even if you have cut off your tongue, your infraction of slander is still there. In the past, you used your tongue to slander; now you can also use it to praise. Then, your infraction will be neutralized by your merit. Not only will your infractions be offset, but, due to the greatness of the Mahayana merits, you can eliminate your sins and your collections of merit will also multiply immensely. It is due to the greatness of the Mahayana!" Thus, he started to praise the Mahayana. Hence, Vasubandhu [was regarded as] "composer of a thousand commentaries" (千部論主) - he was very marvelous.

[7B, 07.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 216 L9]

At that time, in Vasubandhu's time, Buddhism was very popular, very prevalent. That was in Kashmir of Northern India, Kashmir. At that time, there was a commentator called Samghabhadra (眾賢論師) in Kashmir. This Samghabhadra commentator watched Vasubandhu Bodhisattva, and Samghabhadra refuted Vasubandhu's views, challenged Vasubandhu. However, Vasubandhu Bodhisattva did not give him any opportunity to debate and avoided Samghabhadra. Once Samghabhadra was avoided, people said, "Well! You see! Vasubandhu Bodhisattva probably is not capable!" (In this comment, we referred to Vasubandhu as Bodhisattva! [Centuries ago, the original comment was not that polite.]) Actually, "That so and so, he is not capable!

Therefore, he avoids the debate.” Vasubandhu’s disciples were upset and said, “Our teacher, with your avoidance [of Samghabhadrā], people will think that you have wronged.” “No! No!” Vasubandhu said, “This is very obvious! Just like the firefly and the sun, there is no need to debate with him. The sun will never vie for glory with the firefly, just let him be!” That is how it went. Thus, Vasubandhu evaded him all along; afterwards, Samghabhadrā never had a chance to debate with Vasubandhu.

[7B, 08.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 217 L2]

At the end of this story now, I will go over another one. Years later, there was another, another Hinayana practitioner, the renowned “Vimalamitra” (無垢友). He was also a Kashmiri. He was erudite with the knowledge of every school and sect of Hinayana. Thus, his fame was reputable cross all five territories of India. Once, he was passing by the stupa of Samghabhadrā and, upon seeing it, he sighed with great sorrow, was somewhat sad with the injustice. He said in front of the stupa, “You! You were a great commentator. (Commentator was the most respectful name in their time. Now, we would say great Dharma master or great Zen master. Commentator, at that time, was highly respectable.) In those days, you were truly an adept, as well as magnanimous and reputable. Unfortunately, you wanted to debate with Vasubandhu, yet you died without fulfilling this wish.” Now he said, “I!” Vimalamitra claimed himself, “Though I may not qualify,” we normally would describe this as incompetent, but he was just being modest! “But, after all, I have the honor of taking the last seat [among the learned].” That is to say, he finally entered, entered the circle [of the learned]. “Therefore, I have to fulfill your wish. Even though Vasubandhu is dead, his teachings still exist. I will do my best to completely eliminate the teachings of

Vasubandhu, and will go so far as to ensure that those who come later will never hear the name of Vasubandhu!” It was like that.

[7B, 09.57; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 217 L13]

Immediately after his slandering, blood came out from the seven openings [of his face]. His tongue stuck out and could not be retracted; it continued to be stuck out. It was described in the book as “five tongues stuck out consecutively” (五舌重出). Wow, it kept on lengthening. Even if we were asked to lengthen our tongues, we would not be able to do so. At that time, he sensed that he was wrong; he felt [that he] had erred! Alas, he confessed immediately. Alas, he realized that it was disastrous. He slandered a Mahayana Bodhisattva and Mahayana teachings. He wrote his last words before death, they were, “Actually, Mahayana itself is indeed the most superior. Its teachings are so profound and penetrating that they are unable to be comprehended by ordinary beings. As for myself, I was very ignorant. Due to ignorance, I slandered these great teachings, and smeared a Mahayana practitioner, [I am] deeply repentant!” Thus he wrote down his confession to declare to those who come later, “Never repeat what I did!” Then, the earth split and he fell into it, without anyone’s awareness. After some time, an arhat walked by and looked at the site. He sighed, “Alas! This person is so pitiful. He was buried alive in the Unrelenting Hell.” This is the story. When Master Xuan-zang went there, he could still see the stupa that was built there to remember this incident.

[7B, 11.24; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 218 L8]

Certainly, if we now follow the Mahayana teachings, this error will never occur. Even though we will not commit it, we need to be aware! At the causal stage, one moment of carelessness will cause this detour to happen; one careless moment will lead to this path. As of now, we will not apply Hinayana to denigrate Mahayana. However, we easily denigrate Hinayana as a Mahayana practitioner. Moreover, we use the teachings we have learned to deny others, this is still denigration, and it is still slander. However, there is one point that I think we should pay attention to: if your application of Mahayana has attainment, the obstacle may not be too serious, may not be too grave. If you deviate from the teachings, once you abandon the teachings, it's hopeless! If we take Hinayana teachings and slander [Mahayana], the effect is definitely horrible!

[7B, 12.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 218 L14]

Why is it that I have to specifically explain this point? It is because, at the present time, the identity of teaching – although we are Mahayana lineage – however, the integrity of the teachings is gradually passing into oblivion. Therefore, there are not too many who can understand them completely. As for applying them to practice, it is the rarest of rarities. There are some! Some do practice, absolutely there are some, [they are] just rare, just scarce. This is the scriptural knowledge. As for application, the first step is ethical discipline. The integrity of ethical discipline [at the present time] is terrible, pretty bad! The ethical discipline of our northern lineage now is really fragmented, shattered. Some northern lineage is still intact, preserved complete integrity. However, for our Chinese [lineage], it is certainly not ideal.

[7B, 12.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 219 L6]

As for the southern lineage, they still maintained complete integrity. Speaking for myself, I personally admire them very much. I always wish to borrow from them, to mend one's own faults by observing the virtues of others for our own improvement. However, upon doing so, if we are careless, we very possibly will have the fault of feeling that alas, that is it [the northern lineage has inferior ethical discipline]! For I have experienced a few such cases before. I heard somewhere in Malaysia, there were Chinese monks; naturally, many overseas Chinese in Malaysia followed the monks to be ordained. After ordination, they were divided into two groups; one group took the vows from the northern lineage, the other group took the vows from the southern lineage. Upon taking the vows, due to the incompleteness of our [northern lineage] precepts, but theirs [of the southern lineage] were more complete, upon returning [from the rites], they made comparisons. Then, [the precepts of northern lineage] seemed to be weaker. Hence, the southern lineage totally denied the Mahayana. This is very dangerous, so I specifically discuss it here. For those of you with the intention to study, read this story carefully! Other than this, there are many similar stories in *The Traditions of Western Countries*, especially the horrible retribution of the Hinayana slandering the Mahayana. By the way, this also tells us to never ever slander the teachings! This is the first section, the first part. Next, the second one:

English LR v.1 p.50

[7B, 14.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 220 L1]

B. The greatness of enabling one to understand that all of the scriptures are instructions for practice

Now with our understanding of the framework, this is the entirety of Buddha Dharma. Thus, we are entering [the core of the teaching]; upon entering, this is the time to rely on the scriptures. The scriptures are the best guidance for

us at this given moment – this is specifically pointed out. Also, the flaws and counter-effects of our lack of recognition of this point will be discussed in this section, so we will be able to purify contaminations and accumulate merits. Otherwise, when we apply the Buddha Dharma, everyone thinks, “Well, being a Buddha is great!” By the time you seriously apply [the teaching], you can't find the gate to enter [Buddha Dharma], are unable to find the entrance. So at that time, there is nothing to be done, thus your only option is to worship the Buddha. This turns out to be the only Dharma entrance that is the way it is – unable to grasp this complete cause [the study of Lamrim]. Now, let's see:

[7B, 15.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 220 L9]
In general, only the scriptures of the Conqueror provide the means to achieve all temporary and ultimate benefit and happiness for those desire liberation,

He [Lama Tsong-kha-pa] presented the essentials in one statement, which divided liberation into two steps - provisional and ultimate. Provisional and ultimate specifically refer to what we usually regard as “high status” and “certain goodness” [v.1 chapter 4 p.70]; they will be briefly explained. In the course of our study and application of the Buddha Dharma, the length of the path is not for accomplishment in one day or one or two lifetimes, or one or two eons. Thus, during the course of progress, you need to constantly maintain self-inspiration, reduce contamination, and increase capacity. In these situations, prior to your encompassing achievement, you continuously strive for improvement, higher and higher, this is called “high status.” High status is a worldly concern, even up to the first-level Bodhisattva - they are usually revealed as royal kings in the six realms, in either human or deity realms, like that. So we find that so many eminent monks and virtuous people are usually born to distinguished families with pleasant

appearances and are endowed with wisdom, [they] encounter Buddha Dharma at a very early age and engage in it immediately – why not us? The principle reasoning is that he [the eminent being] has accumulated meditation experience in past lives. The application of the practice [enabled him to] enhance [himself] and advance in both quantitative measurement and qualitative fulfillment.

[7B, 17.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 221 L6]

For the same kind of person endowed with proper qualifications, your short-term application of the teaching will exceed that of those who lack the qualification to practice for a long period of time. For instance, in our schooling, in the same class, the top [student] or the leading one is usually far ahead. Those trailing, even though they are in the same class, try to keep up with great difficulty. The same applies to the worldly situations. So to apply Buddha Dharma, you do not necessarily have to wait until the final stage, once you apply it properly, the improvement is immediate. Thus, *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons* (了凡四訓) and similar stories of worldly cause and effect cases are the best examples for us. They also provide us with the best encouragement, like that. Nevertheless, *Liao-Fan's Four Lessons* focused on the worldly aspects; however, the effect is different when we earnestly apply Buddha Dharma! This means that, as long as your direction is set on a high goal, it will be attained step by step and, gradually, it will be reached. Please refer to Venerable Atisha and those great scholars (尊者) in India, even including Venerable Naropa and so forth; they all have great family backgrounds and were endowed with individual talents: great family lineage and gifted talents - thoroughly possessed worldly knowledge. Upon entering into the Buddha Dharma domain, the same applies – this is high status.

[7B, 18.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 221 L15]

Lastly, it is called “certain goodness.” Often, although we attain higher status - you have become a millionaire - once we stretch out and die, then where we go is unknown. As a matter of fact, [you could well] fall into the miserable realms; this kind of certainty is not promising. Thus, we consider it as the “plight of three lifetimes” (三世怨), complaining about the effect for three lifetimes. Our resolution now is for ultimate benefit; once your [spiritual] advancement is continuously increasing, enhancing, and improving, the final advancement is certain goodness. How does it work? Right now, we are an ordinary being or may even be in the three miserable realms [hell, animal, hungry ghost]. First, transcend from there to be reborn as human. From the human realm, gradually, gradually improve to become better and better, then enter the deity realm. If you would rather not be reborn in the deity realm and you prefer to remain in the human realm that is fine. When the deciding moment arrives –attainment of Buddhahood - your physical form will become your complete Sambhogakaya [blissful form], the place you reside is your land of bliss (報土). This last cause of high status is certain goodness. Between the two [high status and certain goodness] lies the levels of this relationship, this is what we should know. Later, they will be discussed in detail. So for those of you inspired to attain this, this is “all benefit and happiness,” all advantage and joyfulness, as well as [their] approaches. In order for you to achieve all benefit and happiness, the proper method is required. What is this proper method? It is summarized in one statement, “the scriptures of the Conqueror” – Buddha’s teachings, the teachings bestowed on us by the Buddha. Continuing:

[7B, 19.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 222 L11
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for only the Buddha is free from all error in teaching what is to be adopted and what is to be cast aside.

For the overall content, there is only one being who is capable of teaching us completely and flawlessly – Buddha.

[7B, 20.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 222 L14
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**Thus the *Sublime Continuum (Uttara-tantra)* says:
Because there is no one in this world more wise than the Conqueror –**

**No other who knows precisely with omniscience all [phenomena of the world] and the supreme reality -
Do not disturb any of the collections of sutra set forth by the Sage himself.**

By destroying the system of the Sage, you will harm the sacred teachings.

Next is a verse quoted from a sutra; it states, in this world, in all three realms [desire, form, formless], there is no one that can surpass Buddha, no one is more superior or can exceed Buddha. How is he superior? “No other who knows precisely with omniscience [all phenomena of the world] and the supreme reality.” Buddha’s wisdom is omniscience (一切智智), which endowed him with the capability to precisely know all and do so without any omission. Such a laudable characteristic is not found in any other being. Within the ten realms, other than Buddha, there is none equal. Bodhisattvas have a portion of it [good qualities] but are not complete, not perfect yet. Sravakas have even less and ordinary beings do not have any. So the actual teachings are “set forth by the Sage himself,” this Sage is Buddha. “Do not confuse it” – we must not be rough

with this. We should not say or think that we are clever and say, “Sure! That is the way it should be.” So many of us engage in such thoughts and have this erroneous attitude. Thus, what did the Buddha and Bodhisattvas teach us? This way: for those actions that we are not able to do, we should refrain from saying, “Well, this was convenient for the Buddha at his time; it is no longer applicable now, do away with it!” Do not say this. We should say, “We are embarrassed now, for we are the ordinary beings in this degenerate time.” Have this attitude, “Therefore, what we can truly adapt to is only this portion. This is what we are able to fulfill, the other parts [of the teachings] are unknown to me, are not within my capacity.” This is very important!

[7B, 22.00; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 223 L14]

If you feel, “This Buddha, he taught in that time, it is not applicable now!” Here, do you sense what is in your subconscious - that you see this matter clearly, you are able to see through it clearly. Only you can distinguish that he is wrong and that you are right. It is very obvious that Buddha did not have a clear vision; you are the one with a clear vision. Is that possible? But we have to be careful at the causal stage with any tiny attitude, any small opinion. This is why, in our daily routines now, when encountering a small interaction, [there arises] a small contention. This causal stage begins from somewhere small – always [from] the feeling of, “My way is this. His way is wrong.” Unknowingly, a small matter gradually grows bigger. [Our attitude toward] Sutra should be the same, [otherwise we will] gradually foster this big ego and then slander the teachings.

[7B, 22.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 224 L7]

So for our earnest practice, we should settle these major areas and then proceed to smaller things, to the

subtlest area. You always have to remind yourself by saying, “I lack merits for now, and I have limited knowledge. Only seeing so much, I am only able to do so little.” So what does it accord with? It accords with “knowing the entrance” – once I enter from here, later I still need to be “inspired for profound study.” What should be done to study profoundly? Eliminate obstructions. If [we] say, “oh well! I just know why Buddha did so,” you are not removing obstructions but increasing them. This concept needs to be very clear.

[7B, 23.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 224 L12]

So this part states that the Sutras were taught by Buddha, we should never randomly criticize them. However, in general, we will not randomly criticize; where have we gone wrong? The error is when we lack teachers of good lineage. When we read the Sutra on our own, we will explain it in such a way [with mistaken understanding]; this in fact is very terrible. Sometimes you are not aware of it, but sometimes you are. Often, unknowingly, the habit from beginningless, beginningless latent propensity is formed this way. When seeing [the teaching], you feel that you understand it and you take it for granted – this is ignorance. Buddha Dharma will not pardon you just because you are ignorant. As for cause and effect, there is no room for negotiation, no easy way out. You did not commit the infraction knowingly; however, it is still a sin even if you commit it unknowingly. If it can be pardoned, then at least the worldly view considers that the three miserable realms do not exist. No one would think, “I am fully aware of the possibility of falling to the hell realm so I committed such karmic deeds that lead to hell” this is impossible! We have to understand it properly. The text says, “By destroying the system of the Sage, you will harm the sacred teachings.” You should realize that Buddha established the rules, if you

easily negate them, that harms the sacred teachings. In fact, it accumulates the gravest obstacles for oneself.

[7B, 24.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 225 L8]
Therefore, the words of the Conqueror, the precious collections of sutra and tantra, are the supreme instructions.

Thus, we should know be it prominent or esoteric scriptures, “collections of sutra” refers to prominent teachings, and “tantra” refers to esoteric teachings. All of them are very precious; they are all “the words of the Conqueror.” This Conqueror is the supreme and precise teachings from Buddha. They are the most laudable instructions. Now, where is the problem? It continues:

[7B, 25.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 225 L12]
Nonetheless, since students in this later time will not discover the intent of those words by delving into them on their own without depending on valid commentaries and the personal instructions of excellent beings,

This is to say that, in this degenerate time of ours, our Buddha will transform his target - in other words, it means us. In our degenerate time, our faculties are dull, our karmic obstacles are weighty, and our wisdom is shallow. In this circumstance, without proper and complete explanation, that is “without depending on valid commentaries.” This “valid” has its required qualification. In short, they are the three qualifications to compose a treatise that was mentioned earlier, the three of them [v.1 chapter 1 p.42]. To interpret the treatise, these three are required. Lacking them, we now compose carelessly, that is really bad. That will mislead people on the wrong path, to a winding detour. On top of these [three], an excellent instructor is required; only in this condition are you able to truly fathom Buddha’s original and

profound intent. Lacking these qualifications, then we are unable to understand Buddha's true and profound intent on our own, impossible to comprehend. That is why, upon the guidance of a virtuous teacher, you will be enlightened.

[7B, 26.55; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 226 L9]

For example, now we review the story of the Sixth Patriarch with great ease. We read the same story, it says, "So and so! Mindfully contemplate on it – not pondering the virtuous, not pondering the nonvirtuous – at this juncture; what is your true self?" Our half a day of reading is totally ineffective! Well, when in the vicinity of a virtuous teacher, he [the suitable disciple] will immediately come to proper realization. Why? It is because of the instructions from the virtuous teacher – skillful instruction. Skillful instruction is very important, very crucial!

[Note: The Sixth Patriarch was illiterate, but he was endowed with profound knowledge of the teachings from previous lives. In this life of his, we may mistake that it was very easy for him to attain his achievement.]

[7B, 27.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 226 L14]

the great trailblazers composed treaties and personal instructions that comment on their intended meaning. Therefore, for something to be a pure personal instruction, it must bestow certain knowledge of the classic texts.

This section refers to the "great trailblazers" – these great trailblazers are represented by the two lineages. These two Mahayana [lineages] composed various treaties to expound on the Sutras, as well as specifically point out the essential meanings. If these [personal] instructions are pure, in other words, these instructions are from an

unbroken lineage and have experiential knowledge, are also free from error – these are the required characteristics.

[8A, 00.12; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 231 L1]

What characteristics? The scriptures taught us, well, these great teachings teach us to form conviction [in Buddha Dharma]. You will discover, “Ah, it is absolutely true!” Why say this? Why does it say this? It reveals the key points of applying the teachings here. For us now, applying the teachings without the scriptures, it counters this point. Seeing this point, we should know that not only is our present attitude like this, but the same flaw existed back then in India. This is a historical issue that has existed all throughout the ages. Now, let us take a look, the author continues.

English LR v.1 p.50

[8A, 00.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 231 L6]

No matter how well you learn it, a personal instruction is only something to be cast aside if it cannot bestow certain knowledge of the meaning of the Buddha’s words and the great commentaries on their intent, or if it teaches a path incompatible with these.

There are those who conclude that any classic text should be considered only an explanatory teaching, therefore lacking the key points for practice. They hold that there are separate personal instructions that teach the core meanings that are the heart of practice. They then imagine that there are two separate forms of the excellent teaching – a teaching that is explained to you and a teaching that you practice. Know that this attitude precludes the development of great respect for the stainless sutras and tantras as well as the flawless treatises that comment on their intent. Know also that you accumulate the karmic obstruction of abandoning

the teaching when you see those classic texts as objects of contempt and say, “Those are merely for promoting one’s superficial knowledge English LR v.1 p.51 and eliminating others’ misconceptions; they do not teach the deep meaning.”

From this section, what now? If [you are] concerned with the purified teaching, which reveals to us the flawless instruction, then this instructor must be capable of ensuring our understanding of the great scriptures and having the faith to count on them as the best guidance. Abiding by this will certainly lead us to the perfect effect. Conversely, with regard to abundant teachings, they may end up unable to help you to form conviction for Buddha Dharma. If it does not give you the conviction, not only are you unable to do so, rather you might even say, “Well, this is unreasonable! It should be abandoned.” What does this mean? For example, during our routine practice, well, applying the practice does not need to rely on scripture, such is the case. We talk a lot about logic; there is much talk about it. Now is the time to apply, what should be done? Drop this [scriptural teaching] and hurriedly jump into application - these two steps [scriptural teaching and experiential application]. This is a very common flaw.

[8A, 02.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 232 L10]

Although we are saying, “Yes, we have to evenly complement applicable deeds with [proper] scriptural understanding!” What will the effect be? Works of wonder! Since the emphasis is spread evenly between applications and understanding, the application arises from understanding, application is based on comprehension. Now, with these half-day teachings of yours, [you] respond with, “Ah, now we are ready to apply in action, this [teaching] is

not needed.” At that point, isn’t it problematic? So it says here that, assuming he is speaking of the instruction, the feeling is: alas, you are not able to form uncontrived certainty. Not only that, but you have the thought of casting it aside. Then, in this circumstance, what will the effect be? Here, why did he [the one that disagrees that all scriptures are instructions for practice] say this? He says that the sutras and treatises are only for explanation, just to explain. To actually apply the concepts is “lacking the key points for practice.” The true key points for practice are not here. They are taught elsewhere, yes, you will be taught somewhere else. However, here we should not misunderstand and say that separate transmission is not related to the teaching. In fact, if you truly understand the core of mind training and read about the teaching of the scriptures, the teaching itself is indeed included in the scriptures; not like what is stated above. There is special meaning to it here; we will not discuss it for now.

[8A, 04.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 233 L6]

With the mistaken perception mentioned above, some believe: ah, teaching is for talking and practice is for action. Then, consider the actual teachings [scriptural teaching and experiential application] as two separate things: one is for preaching and the other is for practicing. Thus, the actual Dharma [seems] to be two separate items – preaching and practicing two approaches. In this situation, we will generate [this feeling]: since the teaching is to be preached and not to be practiced, then the teaching is useless! Thus you do not have to value it! Then what? We ignore it, not necessarily despising it, but not generating reverence within. Veneration is most important in studying Buddha Dharma; conversely, the main cause for the teaching to degenerate is lack of reverence. Now, since you reference practicing and

teaching as two different things, then you have created a great obstacle in paying respect [to the teaching].

[8A, 05.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 233 L13]

We have discussed earlier that, for Dharma practice, reverence is of great importance, to respect is very important. Since we have not received the transmissions in their entirety, we thus form the above misconception: regarding the preaching as preaching and practicing as practicing, two different matters! Because [they are regarded] as two matters, you think that scriptures are for preaching, not for application, and you may feel that they are useless and forsake the veneration toward it. That forms our obstacle and it is a mistaken choice. As mentioned earlier, very possibly for now – not just possibly – to us, it is possible that majority of the scriptures are not applicable for now. However, we should have the opposite attitude within - we should feel embarrassed and say, “Alas, you look at youthful Sudhana, he was a virtuous being; nothing about him is not Buddha Dharma. Whereas for us? [We] are unable to apply - almost unable to apply any of it. This is where we should foster deep embarrassment.”

[8A, 06.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 234 L6]

Right now, we are completely the opposite. Not only are we unable to sense it, but we also feel: well, this is not Buddha Dharma! If you plant this negative seed at the causal stage, it is very scary! Thus, the five points written on the board just now are very important for our current application. This habit has already been formed and, from now on, this is where we need to strive for transformation. This is not telling us to immediately - well, the same as in *The Array of Stalks* - uphold all of it accordingly, not like that. Understand, eventually, that this path of ours is direct, that

is it. If you plant the proper seed at the causal stage, soon you will be able to advance on this path, this is the difference. Now, let us move on.

[8A, 06.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 234 L12]

Due to this [cause and effect] relationship, why do you lack reverence? [You] consider that it contains no truthful meaning. The “deep meaning” is the essence of Buddha Dharma. So, what are the scriptures for? They are merely for preaching, just to talk about and they have nothing to do with application; they are unrelated to the deep meaning, so it is taken as “for promoting one’s superficial knowledge and eliminating others’ misconceptions.” Because of this [mistaken perception], you feel that these [scriptures] can be belittled and ignored. This is when [you are] accumulating “the karmic obstruction of abandoning the teaching”! The karmic obstruction of abandoning the teachings is accumulated! So from great teachers’ stories and quotations, we should recognize that the intention of the great teacher’s quote is for the sake of the disciples. The so-called “removal of the bonds” is when the disciple has mental clinging, the teacher removes the disciple’s attachment within, and that is what it means! Great teachers absolutely will not slander scriptures; their function is just the opposite - to enhance the scriptures.

[8A, 07.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 235 L4]

It is like how we are now, we often have this kind of disagreement: regarding my playing of the Dharma instrument, my rhythm is accurate yours is not. Then what? There is a virtuous teacher pointing out to you: “Yours is wrong, too!” The teacher does not necessarily mean it is incorrect; it is to remove your attachment. We need to understand that the purpose of any given Dharma teaching

is to purify our attachment to sentiments. Upon mastering any given study, we are always filled with the feeling that my way is right and his is to be disparaged. You are enhancing your personal opinion and self-conceit; question: is this Buddha Dharma? Thus, at that time, a qualified teacher will comply with your [state of mind] and try to help you out. If necessary, you might be berated. This we have to know. So, not just the patriarchs in the history did this, it is the same with [the virtuous teachers of] the present time. If we can understand this point, we will spontaneously learn through experience, be in harmony with, and purify [ourselves] in all respects; and then accumulate merits. Otherwise, the more you learn, well, the more flaws you acquire, the more defects will arise from here.

[8A, 08.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 235 L12]

Therefore, for those who desire liberation, the supreme and authentic instructions are indeed the classic text.

Thus, we should reflect mindfully on it. This “reflection,” as in “reflect accordingly,” has an extremely important concept and perception behind it! Later, in the karma section, it will be explained to us in great detail, I will briefly go over it here. Our routine actions dominate our ups and downs, and transform contamination into purification, etc. Everything relies on this reflection, this process of mental reflection [v.1 chapter 19 p.289 main mind and other mental processes]. We refer to the feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness [v.1 p.317]. What is “Feeling”? What is “Discrimination”? What is “Reflection”? This is a kind of mental activity. We should understand the Dharma characteristics, the characteristics of Dharma are these [mental-reflection and their process]. Therefore, the true purpose of studying scriptures is revealed here.

[8A, 09.42; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 236 L4]

After you have received the explanation of the scriptures, guidance from qualified teachers, these Dharma characteristics, this is what you should truly recognize as our thoughts - the mental activity at that given time. Reflect, "Wow! This is called the mental process or thought process; certain types of mental-processes are defiled, other types are virtuous. Certain types of virtuous thought are contaminated, other types are uncontaminated." So, now great teachers taught us what this type of "mental reflection" is? It is virtuous, but whether it conforms to the uncontaminated or contaminated realm, we should know. So, what should we do? That is it, like I have mentioned – "conform to," [the guidance from qualified teachers] that is in the proper direction, then advance step by step. For we are ordinary beings, due to these gradual steps forward, you are slowly purifying, slowly uplifting and lifting from this tainted world, eventually transcending to liberation. We should have this thought, by saying, all the great scriptures to those of us who genuinely seek liberation – it is absolutely true and the substantial precious essence is without any flaw. Then why is [liberation] not attainable?

[8A, 10.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 236 L13]

However, due to your limited intelligence and so forth, you may be unable to recognize those texts as the supreme instructions through depending on them alone.

Oh, so this is the reason - it is because our level of wisdom is inadequate, too inadequate! There are other factors aside from this – inadequate in wisdom plus weighty attachment, well, stubborn attachment! On top of that, there is external influence from others, all kinds of nonvirtuous friends and so on. Doomed! So, in this circumstance,

reading the scriptures will not truthfully comprehend the key essence.

**[8A, 11.27; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 237 L4]
Thus, you must seek out personal instructions, thinking,
“I will seek certain knowledge of those texts based on
the personal instructions of an excellent being.”**

That’s why we have to rely on virtuous teacher. From the personal instructions of virtuous teacher, then [we] grasp the essence of the scriptures’ intent and obtain uncontrived understanding. With this understanding, your advancement with this knowledge becomes a direct path – high status. Once you truly attain this high status, we will be fearless. Why? It is very simple! Are we worried about this human form of ours now? We are not too worried about it now, but only - well! Upon death, the downfall is frightening. If we apply some improvement and sense the effect: wow, we are happy about [what we have learned so far] and keep doing it. Try to improve a little more, of course the joy will increase! Then, with this improvement of yours, move forward step by step. Thus, the true fearfulness is not this, then what is the issue? It is that we did not grasp this key point [the essence of the Sage’s intention]. As long as you grasp the key point and improve step by step, that is surely great. This concept will be discussed later; it will be covered in the future. Before we attain proper perceptions, always hang on to the key essence [for proper advancing direction]. The reason that we cannot attain the proper perceptions [is due to the] lack of [guidance] from excellent teachers. The reason of lacking excellent teachers – our insufficient qualifications – is not recognizing excellent teachers or lacking the aspiration to seek an excellent teacher, etc. In addition to avoid formation of the following mistaken perception, what is the next mistake?

[8A, 12.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 238 L2]
But do not think, “The texts are without substance, since they merely promote a superficial knowledge and eliminate others’ misconceptions;

This view is definitely not encouraged. Never have this idea or even grasping on: the scripture and text are merely for preaching, they are not that crucial! [We] should know, it is not the flaw of the classic texts, rather, it is that we did not hear [the teaching properly]. Or, very possibly, it is that the instructor is unable to deliver the essentials; this is definitely possible, absolutely could happen. That is, the speaker spoke, we hear it and we have to move on step by step. Just as we have mentioned, for example, there are various melodies for chanting rites – this one is great, very good! Once we understand the chanting, you don’t attach to it. Although it is good, you become attached to it [and say]: Oh, this is the ocean-tide melody; the other is drum-mountain melody; and this is precious-flower-mountain melody... Each one has its own complete integrity and brilliant content. If his [the one leading the chanting] original intent was to come here and gather people together [in the monastery], he has done so and saved you effort, isn’t this nice? Unfortunately, you have to feel, alas, he is not good and you are better. The problem is within me; this is what we should recognize, just one of my examples here.

[8A, 13.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 238 L12]

Of course, it is possible that he may have included strange parts, which are mistaken additions. That is possible! This we have to distinguish very clearly. Thus, studying Buddha Dharma, why [do we] need to learn widely from the scriptures? This is the true intent [for us] to attain the essence. You must distinguish between the correct and the specious [what appears right but is actually wrong] – the

correct one is the unmistakable one, the specious is paradoxical. The difference is clear – to know what is to be adopted and what is to be cast aside. With this, when you proceed, you will improve no matter how harsh the external conditions are. To you, you will definitely advance; the worse the external conditions, the better you are. Thus, in the Sutras great patriarchs and Bodhisattvas all say, “Virtuous beings are my teachers; nonvirtuous ones are my resources [for merits].” What is a teacher? What is a resource? We learn from virtuous ones; as for nonvirtuous ones, well, that is your resource – merits. Why is this nonvirtuous one your resource? Well, if a beggar comes to ask things from you, he provides the opportunity for you to perfect generosity. If a villain comes over and gets mad at you, he helps to perfect your patience, ethical discipline, and joyous perseverance, right? We should know this theory, definitely should know it! At that time, we can then improve within step by step. So, it follows:

**[8A, 15.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 239 L8]
yet the personal instructions, since they reveal the deep meaning, are supreme.”**

For true understanding [of Dharma teachings], that requires us to solidify the essence of the deep meaning; for it is supreme, the best! This statement is very important. Let’s continue.

**[8A, 15.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 239 L11]
The great yogi Chang-chup-rin-chen (Byang-chub-rin-chen) said:**

Well, he one of the primary disciples of the Great Elder [Atisha]. He is from Hlo-drak [v.1 chapter 1 p.43]. This great yogi was the attendant of the Great Elder; he attended to

the Great Elder throughout Atisha's entire stay in Tibet. This yogi is truly great.

**[8A, 15.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P240 L1]
Concerning instructions, complete mastery does not mean gaining ascertainment of a mere small volume that fits in the palm of one's hand; it means understanding all of the scriptures as instructions for practice.**

The aforementioned not only quotes from scriptures, but even from great teachers. This great yogi attained very high status, equivalent to great teachers in China; he certainly is a remarkable patriarch as well. Take the Tian-tai [lineage] for example, his status would be the same as the "Great Elder Guan-ding Zhang-an" [of the Sui dynasty]. Well, we refer to this elder as extraordinary! This great being said, "You must know how to truly "comprehend the ultimate essence of the profound teaching" (which to us, means to thoroughly understand the teachings.) You should realize that when you truly recognize this, it does not mean: well, I gained an understanding of this palm-sized teaching (it is like the size of your palm, in other words, it is the size of this book.) Upon attaining affirmed understanding: "Ah! I got it." (This certainty means, well – not only recognize it but also have experiential knowledge.) That is not enough. It should be "all of the scriptures as instructions for practice." You must understand this, have to know this."

[8A, 16.54; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 240 L11]

Thus, we often say, "Once one scripture is known well, the understanding of all scriptures will be connected." Some people only know one sutra well and not others. These two are different. Yes, certainly! Once you have extensive understanding, the essentials are those conforming items

[get hold of the key guidance]. From here, you delve into profound study, once you deepen the learning, all the others will be under your control. When you view it closely, you should experience it in all respects, and even widely use everything. Whereas for the other type, he holds onto one item and that is the only one! Yes, it is the mentality, no matter which school or sect, they all have this type of attitude. With proper learning, any school or sect includes all [others]; otherwise, it does not matter which school or sect, you will reside on self-grasping. In the beginning, in the *Array of Stalks* and “Tian-tai” teachings, they are all inclusive, whereas when it comes to Nichiren-shu, after spreading to Japan, it dropped everything but five words; isn't it a very obvious example? This is what we need to understand.

[Note: Buddhism schools in China - Array of Stalks, Tian-tai, Zen, Pure land, Precepts, Tenet teachings, Tantra, and the Three-commentaries.]

[8A, 17.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 241 L5]
Also, the great Elder's student Gom-ba-rin-chen-la-ma (sGom-pa-rin-chen-bla-ma) said that he understood all the texts as instructions for practice by “grinding to dust” all wrong actions of body, speech, and mind during one session of meditation on Atisha's instructions.

Next in the parentheses are quotes from great teachers, like what was just stated. Other than the special explanation of the citations, the subtler levels we don't really understand. It means to say: this is just like Venerable Atisha! When he taught any Dharma category, he would analyze it in great detail, without any exception. When we discuss application now, it seems very simple; actually, why apply the teachings? Applying the teachings is [due to] our actions usually being contaminated; this contaminated karma arises from nothing

but the physical, verbal, and mental – the three karmic doors. Now, he [Atisha] is different, totally the opposite of this. To be the opposite requires a complete set of instructions. The explanation of the instruction, indeed, at any given time, [the teaching] is able to describe the three karmic doors – physical, verbal, and mental – in very, very minute detail, clarifying every aspect clearly and precisely. Thus, if you are able to understand it this way, you will naturally react, reflect, and speak. No matter what, there is improvement. Consequently, the practice is twenty-four hours.

[8A, 19.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 242 L2]

Yet we are not at that level. When speaking of applying the teaching, bowing in the prayer hall is considered as meditation practice; outside of it does not count. Often, [we] consider that sitting cross-legged is meditation, otherwise it is not. Or [we] apply physically, but not mentally; mentally but not physically. Atisha was not like this! Why? He had complete attainment. Thus, he said, “Now I know that all the classic texts are instructions.” Teaching us each and every part; some are primary, some are branches, and some are even very subtle.

[8A, 19.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 242 L6]

You too must come to such an understanding.

We must know this from the beginning. His meaning was: not to tell you to achieve it or accomplish it immediately, but we need to conceptualize it in the beginning. So, to guide our correct views, here is the starting point. Once you cultivate this correct view, then what? The cause! Proper cause produces proper effect. Otherwise, we say, “If the causal stage is not solid, the effect will be distorted.” We lack this understanding, we don’t realize it! This is a really pitiful thing, truly pathetic.

[8A, 20.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 242 L12]

Up to here, on the other hand, we also say, “Alas, this is the only perfect teachings, all the others are not.” Wrong again! Incorrect again! Mistaken again! We have to know that once you have the complete teaching, then find ways to help others. If you consider that he is wrong, how do you help him? You need to know how to help him skillfully, and then you are on the right track. If you think that I am right and his is wrong, with this cause of yours, talk may be right but action is not. The important thing for us is that the speaker needs to know how to apply it, this is what is important. Your complete cause should not reject the incomplete ones, to say nothing of those with incomplete causes. This is where we need to repeatedly contemplate. Therefore, this is where I emphasize again and again for the same cause, just this same reason. Next, it says again,

[8A, 21.09; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 243 L5]
The Precious Teacher [Drom-dön-ba] said

Below it cites great teachers’ quotations for validation.

[8A, 21.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 243 L7]
that it is a mistake if, after studying many teachings, you feel a need to look elsewhere for how to practice the teaching.

He said, “Well, you have learned a lot, but when you start to practice, [you] stop talking about [the teaching]. Now to practice, there is a completely different thing to learn. Alas! What a mistake.”

[8A, 21.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 243 L10]

Thus, there are those who have studied many teachings for a long time, but do not know at all how to practice the teaching. When they wish to practice, they must look elsewhere. Their error is in not understanding what I have already explained.

Likewise, there are those who have studied many teachings, but when it comes to practice, alas! [They] say there is a completely different set [of application]. This is wrong, this is incorrect! In fact, we do have a lot of missing links, many disconnections. To be honest, there is no exception that any moment in a twenty-four hour day all can be utilized to apply the practice. Now let's review, well, morning and evening sessions count [as meditation]. Many even consider that morning and evening sessions, well, are meaningless and can be done away with; everyone gathers there just as a mere formality. Do you think this fact is true? To a certain extent, this is true. However, we cannot say that just because it is a mere formality, you remove it, this would be totally wrong! How do I feel about it? Although it is a degenerate time, at least the formality is there; before it is totally destroyed, quickly bring the proper content back, then there is hope [of preserving the integrity of morning and evening sessions]. If you destroy the formality, that would be too bad! Do you understand? This is very important, very crucial!

[8A, 22.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 244 L7]

So, Buddha distinctly taught, Buddha explained very clearly. At end despite there is nothing left but with the Buddha statue there; most people don't know this: merits are accumulated just by glancing at the image. The three Jewels have such a remarkable significance! Yet, we frivolously feel: well, there is no substance [in the three Jewels] and you drop it. Too bad! This is where we need to pay special attention. At this juncture, if we carry this

perception, please be reminded: I am an ordinary being, I am a common person. This concept is too important! So, what must we rely on? [We] have to rely on studying widely and plenty of learning. If you have properly studied one category and you do not want to take the aforementioned extensive path - at that time you hang on to [that category]. Well, let's say I am into Zen and grasp on [to the Zen practice]; I am into chanting Buddha's name and focus on this practice. Once I see Amitabha or when I attain the realization of the true nature of reality, [I will become] fearless! You don't need to worry about other [Dharma categories]. In fact, it was the same at Buddha's time, back then, Hinayana or other [practitioners] were all mindfully focused on their own practices without any contention, why? Very simple, for they heard this statement said by Buddha: alas, Buddha was so focused on resolving the issue of rebirth, so mindfully attentive to it, not minding others' business. Like that! Thus, that is the period called "complete Dharma residing in the world," there was no contention at all.

[8A, 23.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 245 L2]

Actually, the cause of contention was planted much earlier. I might as well tell a true story. During Buddha's time, the disciples had all sorts of tendencies: Venerable Kasyapa focused on teaching ascetic practice, everybody had heard of him. At the end, Buddha said to him, "So-and-so, you are getting older now, you should rest, take it easy; do not practice asceticism anymore!" Venerable Kasyapa replied, "Worldly honored one! I have always obeyed you, but not this very last time!" However, Buddha was not necessarily concerned about [Venerable Kasyapa's] disobedience and responded with, "Why don't you comply?" Instead, [he] said, "Very well! Very well! According to what Kasyapa [has done], his persistence, the preservation of the teaching relies on that kind of will power."

[8A, 24.20; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 245 L8]

Here it does not mean practicing asceticism is the only method! Well, no! [Let me] mention another figure to you,

Sronakotivimsa (二十億耳), as he was commonly known.

Sronakotivimsa was the child of a wealthy family; he planted consummate causes in his previous lives and, thus, he was born with great wealth, very rich. In his home, he was born with his feet on thick furs, and his home was covered with thick carpet everywhere. Even when going out, for instance to the temple, etc., his father would have the way cleaned and covered with carpet, then they go out. Is this possible for us? In our time, even for a worldly prominent figure, it is impossible to say: “I am going to the Tai-chung train station now, pave the way there with carpet.” Impossible! Yet, Sronakotivimsa was [brought up] that way. Later, he was ordained, and followed with ascetic practice. However, no matter how hard he applied it, it did not work for him. Buddha told him: “Give him the good things; give him whatever good things he wants.” That was done. Not long after that, he attained realization. What does this illustrate? You see, at Buddha’s time there were some like these ascetics, and some others enjoyed ease and comfort. They didn’t have any contention. There was absolutely no argument at all. If it were us now, it would be terrible. Alas! We all compete over a tiny difference, and making a big mess.

[8A, 25.34; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 246 L4]

What am I trying to express? [I am] not just describing the apparent attitude. That is why I repeatedly mention: you grasp the key point and whatever you engage in will be correct. The ancient practitioners, they were constantly mindful of resolving personal [mind training] issues. Then

you may say: “I am a Mahayana.” That is great! The concern is that you might not want to be a Mahayana. Mahayana must be mindful of others; it is to help others, not for you to criticize them! This needs to be clarified. If necessary, of course, under the situation that you point out directly, yes, you can berate him. But, in general, to berate others you need to be endowed with the condition of lacking of hostility within, this is very important. Thus, upon this aspect, I feel deeply embarrassed. Although I am able to remove it [the hostility within] gradually, I can keep an even mind in general. When encountering an arising condition, I realize that: alas, the anger is there, it does not correspond [to the teaching]. Often, when great beings truly berate [others], it is out of their great compassion. If you recognize this, carelessness will not work, so he uses the direct approach. Deep down, he [the great being] is certainly mindful with great spirit-of-enlightenment and great compassion. Thus, in this situation, he senses your engagement and applies a comparable method. In this situation, [he is] capable of doing so, [he] would be worried if you are not mindful [of others]. Now, due to our level of insight is not there, whatever approach [to help others] would be [considered] wrong! This is what we should recognize. So, let us continue.

[8A, 27.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 247 L1]
Here, the teachings are

What about the complete teachings of the Sage? The author still quotes from a treatise first.

[8A, 27.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 247 L3]
as set forth in Vasubandhu’s *Treasury of Knowledge (Abhidharma-kosa)*:

The excellent teaching of the Teacher [Buddha] is twofold:

Those teachings having a nature of scripture and those having a nature of realization.

As this says, there are no more than two types of teaching – scriptural and realized.

Here, it quotes from the *Treasury of Knowledge*. Often, the *Treasury of Knowledge* is referred to as “the intelligent treatise of the Hinayana.” In other words, it is the final essence of the Hinayana. So question: why is he quoting from Hinayana instead of Mahayana here? To clarify here: even Hinayana taught in this way [scriptural teaching and experiential realization], so needless to mention the Mahayana.

[8B, 00.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 249 L1]

Initially, Mahayana was based on the Hinayana foundation, and Mahayana further clarified Hinayana foundation and extended it to the highest vehicle, without exception [for all Mahayana schools]. Thus, the actual and precise teachings of the Buddha are divided into two parts: one is the scriptural and the other is experiential. There is nothing other than these, so what are these two?

[Note: Theravada is the original name for Hinayana. Hinayana was named later to distinguish it from Mahayana. Hina = small; Maha = great]

English LR v.1 p.51

[8B, 00.25; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 249 L4]

The scriptural teachings determine the way that you take the teachings in hand, the procedures for practice;

What is “scriptural”? It is used to identify, illustrate, and explain what you should do, what you should cast aside, how to apply it during practice - to mend your old behavior as an ordinary being, and to change it to correspond with the Sages. You identified previous mistakes and, now, with this recognition, properly engage in practice. Although [you

may have] this understanding, the latent propensity is still weighty. At that time, for you to follow this so-called practice, this is truly applying the teachings! Then do we not consider prostrations to Buddha as practice? Prostration of course is practice. Why prostrate to Buddha? It is due to you inflating this “me” to be the greatest. Now, with this awareness, oh, this is terribly wrong. So, you see yourself as the lowest and proceed to prostrate to Buddha. How about chanting Buddha’s name? Because you normally are mindful of afflictions, now you do not conform to them, so you replace them with Buddha’s name. Thus, if we understand this concept, then everything can help mend [our] behavior.

[8B, 01.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 250 L3]

In this situation, prostration and chanting Buddha’s name are certainly types of practice. Upon leaving the prayer hall, even without prostrating or chanting Buddha’s name, you are still practicing! If you fail to grasp this important point, sorry to say, at the present, if you are not applying the teaching, your prostration and chanting of Buddha’s name should not be counted as practice either! Therefore, great teachers told us, “If you are not conforming to [the teaching] from within, even breaking your head by bowing is still of no use! If you do not grasp this concept, even if you chant until your throat is hoarse, it is still futile!” Isn’t this obvious? This is the concept, this is the reasoning! So we were told, here we were first told: upon understanding this concept, you abide by it. And then? Once understood...

[8B, 02.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 250 L9]

the teachings as they are realized are your practice of these procedures in accordance with how you have already determined them.

Based on the previous concept, you then abide by it to apply accordingly. So,

English LR v.1 p.52

[8B, 02.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 250 L11]

Thus, these two serve as cause and effect.

Between these two [the scriptural and realization teachings], there is a reciprocal relationship of cause and effect. The scriptural teaching is the cause. With this accurate understanding, it will result in the effect of realization; the resulting effect is from applying the teaching. Then, conversely, applying the teaching is the cause, attaining the realization is the effect. This cause and effect are certain. They are certain to arise from the recognition of the scriptural knowledge, and practice by corresponding to the scripture teaching. Here you may ask this, “Well, in this case, you come to the monastery to talk about these rules, those concepts are foreign to me, [please] do not tell me these upfront.” There is a reason; for, once you enter [the monastery], to have the rules clarified before applying the practice is impossible, not possible! But at least there is a sign, it is very clear, that you come to the monastery with the intention of “I want to apply the teaching.” Or in the case of, well, recognizing that this [teaching] is great! Over here, at the causal stage with the recognition of faults in the worldly environment, being in [the monastery] is better. Since the mundane world is deficient and this place is better, of course you have to remove the worldly perception and come here to learn. Moreover, if you wait until comprehending them all and then start the application, yet you are unable to apply them, by then it will be too late. Even if you understood them, in case you die, then it is too

late - although you understood [the teaching], it is of no use, it turns into the plight-of-three-lifetimes (三世怨); it is pitiful.

[Note: Proper practice is to apply the teachings as you learn them.

Plight-of-three-lifetimes: first lifetime accumulate virtuous merits, wasted merits without dedicating to ultimate enlightenment in the 2nd lifetime, result in suffering the 3rd lifetime.]

[8B, 03.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 251 L9]

So, when entering [the monastery], bear this in mind: my knowledge of the mundane convention is not working, I need to rely on the guidance of a virtuous teacher. This is the best guidance, the best approach. Honestly, to be honest, waiting to have thorough understanding and apply it afterwards, it does not work this way in the secular world. Do you understand what rice is before you start eating it? Do you understand air before you start breathing? Do you get to know your mother before you allow her to raise you? The worldly things are just as simple as this! Is this right? Well, the above points are without any recklessness or superstition, it is absolutely reasonable, this we have to know. On the contrary, it is our ignorance and our attachment. Let's all reflect on it, is it correct? It's just that simple.

[8B, 04.15; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 251 L15]

So now we know, oh, this is how it works - scriptural teachings and realization. Although, before you understand the reasoning, you went to the monastery, those Dharma masters that you have faith in told you what to do, that is exactly it [the scriptural teaching]. You listened to what they said and then abided by applying it in action, this is still

within the scope of both the scriptural and experiential essence; it must be in this order! Later, while you apply the teaching, you will gradually increase your understanding of the scriptural teaching through experience. While your scriptural knowledge is deepened, your experiential knowledge is also reinforced; these two, mutually complement each other. Thus, as a matter of fact, this scriptural teaching and experiential realization are not two separate matters – after completion of the scriptural teaching, and then apply it, no! Teach some and apply some, gradually advance. Just like when we were in school, in elementary school, you gradually advanced step-by-step, one step at a time; were repeatedly taught and then practiced. When we were in elementary school, the teachers told us this is one, one plus one equals two. You went home and practiced. Because you practiced, you are able to advance to the second grade, so you understood the teaching more and more, and then your realization became deeper. Every step in this order is very distinct, very clear! Let's continue to read the text, "Thus, these two serve as cause and effect." Next,

[8B, 05.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 252 L10]

For example, it is like showing a horse the racecourse before you race. Once you have shown it, you then race there.

It is just like a horserace. First you are shown how to start, after that, follow the instructions accordingly to race. For us now, it is like driving a car; you are shown the map and how to get there, then? You start driving.

[8B, 05.39; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 252 L13]

It would be ridiculous to show the horse one racecourse and then race on another.

If you were told to head in this direction in the first place, when you actually started, you take another direction, what a joke. Like if we were driving, now you plan to go somewhere, look at the map. You read the map for a long time but, by the time you start driving, you take the opposite direction. Why did you read the map? Isn't it absurd? The sutras and commentaries taught us all these perceptions, the proper methods. Similarly, take our present situation for example, coming to the monastery with the intent to apply the teaching. Arriving at the monastery, well, this Dharma master or the Abbot telling you what to do, yet you respond with a tilted head, "I want to do it in this way!" Then you don't need to come to the monastery, this is very obvious, and the same concept applies here. You may clarify [your reasoning to do it your way] by explaining it clearly, this is appropriate. We have to recognize and understand this concept very clearly and thoroughly.

**[8B, 06.32; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 253 L7]
Similarly, why would you determine one thing by means of study and reflection, and then, when you go to practice, practice something else?**

Here it says: when studying this, listen then reflect on the same topic. The original intent of studying and reflection is to transmit the scriptural teaching. But, at the time of application, [if you] practice something else? No way! It is just like horseracing and driving.

**[8B, 06.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 253 L10]
In this vein, the last of Kamalasila's three Stages of Meditation (*Bhavanakrama*) says:**

It's like what it says in the *Stages of Meditation*, which is a very important instruction for practice.

[8B, 07.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 253 L12]

Further, what you meditate on with the wisdom arisen from meditation is just that which you know with the wisdom that has arisen from study and reflection. You do not meditate on something else. This is similar to how you show a horse a racetrack, and then race it there.

The first stage of practice: why do we rely on a virtuous teacher? [We rely on them] to listen to the teachings. After hearing the teachings, then what? [Then followed by] proper reflection. After reflection, you understand his teaching with certainty. Thus, using what you have reflected on and determined to practice it accordingly. Therefore, when you apply, you should practice the portion that you have understood with certainty. This is the proper perception, not anything else. This concept is so important to us, never, never ever race on the wrong course! Just like the aforementioned horserace example.

[8B, 07.47; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 254 L6]

Thus, these instructions include, in complete form, all the key points of the path from the scriptures and their commentaries –

Due to these complete instructions, all the key points and the essence from all scriptures and their commentaries can be obtained. That means, upon comprehending the first point, the second one can be connected and integrated. The first point is that all scriptures and their commentaries [are instructions]. Then, why is it that you are not able to obtain [their benefits]? It is due to your insufficient conformity [to those instructions]. Once you have received proper

explanations from qualified guidance, the benefits will arise. Then, you abide by it: at present, the starting point is here; later, advancing step-by-step on a direct path toward a speedy accomplishment. And what is the content? The content is listed below:

[8B, 08.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 254 L12]

from how to rely on the teacher through serenity and insight.

These are actual stages for our practice. The first step of practice is relying on a virtuous teacher; “serenity and insight” are along the course of your practice. The ultimate effect arises from the application of these two - serenity and insight.

[8B, 08.48; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 255 L1]

They then lead you through concise stages of practice in which you engage in stabilizing meditation on that which requires stabilizing meditation, and you analyze with discerning wisdom that which requires analytical meditation. By doing this, you will understand that all of the scriptures are instructions for practice.

Thus, according to these stages, in areas that require stabilizing meditation, apply stabilization. What is “stabilizing meditation”? It is not to engage in actions that should be cast aside and not allowed, don’t do it, abandon it. “That which requires analytical meditation” – whatever needs to be done, you should adopt it. Then, what else should be done? Stabilizing meditation is simple – you just abandon it [that which should be cast aside]. Actually, stabilizing meditation should be done after you have analyzed with wisdom, then the abandoning will be effective. Otherwise, the strong clinging within is still untouched - “Well, I prefer this!” That is the sign of not being able to cast [something]

aside. You lack discerning wisdom and are unable to recognize what to adopt and cast aside; nothing can be cast aside and nothing will be adopted. The former tells us to cast aside, the latter tells us to adopt – we should strive at this. To have “discerning wisdom” requires the wisdom of analysis, through proper contemplation and observation. Then, arrange those have been identified into steps for application, to guide us to advance step by step from the first step of an ordinary being all the way to the completion of Buddhahood, without any omission. With this attitude, all of the scriptures and the Sutra teachings are the best guidance at the present.

[8B, 10.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 255 L12]

Otherwise,

If you do not abide by such a complete and accurate path,

[8B, 10.11; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 256 L1]
you will spend your entire life without discerning wisdom, practicing just some incomplete portion of the path and not the complete corpus. Thus, you will not understand that the classic texts are instructions for practice, but you will abandon them, seeing them as merely promoting superficial knowledge and eliminating others' misconceptions.

If you do not have the proper recognition and are unable to grasp the complete concept in its entirety, you will practice only part of the path. It is not referring to a non-Buddhist path; it is still the same [Buddhist] path. However? It is only partial, and is incomplete; partial of course is incomplete. Just like this house of ours, can you identify this pillar as part of the house? Certainly, then you hold on to it and claim it is the house, will it work for you? No such

possibility! This is very obvious! If you are driving, and you take the tire and claim it is the car, not only it is not drivable but it also becomes a burden for you to go to places! Although this is only a joke, of course I just emphasize this in passing.

[8B, 11.05; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 256 L9]

As we know, in this circumstance, you grasp firmly on this: “without discerning wisdom.” But you did not apply formal contemplation and analysis – which is the actual wisdom. In this situation, “spend your entire life” – you worked for a lifetime, but with more application, the further away you are from the path. Not only the classic scriptures are not genuine instructions for practice, but you also think: Ah, they are for preaching to others! This is [the sign] that you took a wrong turn. Therefore, the two joke-like examples [pillar as house; tire as car] illustrate the same purpose. The original intent of the house is for comfortable living: in the winter, it protects you from the wind or catching a cold; in the summer, it protects you from exposure from the sun. Now, if you cling to a pillar with great exhaustion, in winter, the extreme wind blows as usual, and the summer has melting heat; just like that. Thus, you have wronged! Consequently, due to your lack of understanding, you consider that the classic scriptures are not genuine instructions and are only mere talk. Then, you disparage it and forsake it, faults will arise!

[8B, 12.10; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 257 L3]

It is evident that the topics explained in the classic texts are, for the most part, only things that require analysis with discerning wisdom.

At the present, regarding the perceptions set forth in most scriptures, they all require contemplation and analysis

with wisdom to properly distinguish right from wrong. This is the way it is.

[8B, 12.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 257 L6]
If you cast them aside when you practice, then how can you develop an understanding that sees them as the supreme instructions?

In case you lack such recognition and are unable to grasp this point, then you will not be able to develop certainty toward the scriptures. Because, you exclude them as a practitioner, by doing so, it will naturally not become: “Ah! This is the most supreme one” and consider [the scriptures] are totally inapplicable! In this situation, ask: who will provide you with the best guidance? For those of us who are sincere about learning the Buddha Dharma, we realize that the best instructor is Buddha. [However if we said] that Buddha’s scriptural teachings are useless, one may ask: “Are the texts taught by those following Buddha more useful?” Thus, under this situation, we would not follow Buddha, and claim: “I am learning from so and so!” This is the right thing to do! ” For if you begin to follow Buddha, obviously this study will have flaws in it! Next, it says:

[Note: Monk has pointed out this section is in a debating format to contrast the flaws of cast aside the scriptures.]

[8B, 13.23; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 257 L13]

If these are not the supreme instructions,

Suppose that the aforementioned scriptural teachings from Buddha and the great Bodhisattvas are not the supreme instructions. May [I] ask:

[8B, 13.31; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 258 L2]

then could you find a master whose instructions surpass these?

Who else is able to find a better master? There is none. Thus, it is saying that it is not possible, impossible [to find a better teacher]. This is a misconception.

**[8B, 13.49; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 258 L5]
Therefore, when it becomes clear to you that the profound and vast scriptural collections along with their commentaries are instruction for practice, you will quickly understand that the classic texts of the profound tantric collections along with their commentaries are also instructions for practice. You will then become certain that they are the supreme instructions.**

On the other hand, when taking the right direction, if you can take the profound scriptural collections – which are profound and vast classic texts – [you may] think: Wow! Actually, these are the best instructions for us at the present. In this case, for all other more profound [teachings] – regardless of whether they are Sutra, Tantra, scripture, or commentary, all sorts of great instructions – without too much effort, you will be able to understand the true essence. In this situation, since this is the essence that is best for our practice, you will treat it with great respect. It is like a treasure map; if the map is lost, sorry, you will not be able to find the treasure! At that time, you will absolutely not let anyone take it. Even if you memorized it, lose it or others steal it, then others will reach [the treasure] first! This is very obvious and clear, that is, in this situation,

**[8B, 15.03; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 258 L13]
You will completely overcome the misconceptions that consider these tantras to be only teachings that should**

be cast aside because they are not actual instructions for practice.

“Completely overcome!” So, if you can hang on to this important point, then the flaw mentioned earlier will be eliminated. What is the earlier flaw? Because you lack recognition of the proper instructions and you do not take the classic texts as actual instructions. As a result, you disparage and abandon the actual teachings. This is a mistaken view and mistaken discrimination. Now these [misconceptions] are removed! So, what we really need to eliminate – this does not mean eliminate without discretion – is the erroneous portion. These great teachers constantly remind us not to discriminate, and that is due to our frequent erroneous discretions and lack of proper comprehension; this is the true cause. Later, it will explain this to us in great detail, expound in great detail to us. Hence, this is the second point, the second [on v.1 p.50 B.]. Then the third one:

English LR v.1 p.53

[8B, 16.07; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 259 L8]

C. The greatness of enabling one easily to find the Conqueror’s intent

Yes, we were told earlier that all the scriptures are the essential conditions for Buddhahood, which is the first step. The second step is, with the understanding described above, not only we are in need, but we can also be instructed immediately. Thus, [these two steps] are both useful. However, by the same token of putting it to good use, for you to probe [to a certain level of Buddha’s intent], you usually spend a long time with a lot of hardship. Even if you grasp it, it is with great hardship. If you are unable to find it, then it is troublesome! Now, with the essential instructions from an excellent being, you quickly and easily attain [the

intended meaning]. This is the third section, let's look at the text:

[8B, 16.50; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 259 L14]

The classic texts – the scriptures along with their commentaries – are the supreme instructions. Yet, even if beginners – persons without extensive training – delve into them, they will not discover their intended meaning without depending on the personal instructions of an excellent being.

Certainly, the scriptures taught by Buddha and commentaries by great Bodhisattvas – of course, Buddha also taught commentaries – are the most sublime and supreme instructions. However, for us “beginners,” for those new practitioners who have not purified obstacles and not yet accumulated merits, those who are not accustomed to the path – pudgala means living beings – if [we] do not rely on a truly qualified excellent being and use our own effort to search directly, the true intent will not be found, it is unattainable. Even if you can attain it, next, it says:

[8B, 17.52; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 260 L7]
Even if they find the intended meaning, their search will require a very long time and a great deal of effort.

Even if you are able to attain it, it is certain to take a long time and involve tremendous hardship. Often, we are like this: not believing in what others have said; once a lot of hardship has been experienced, “Alas! So it is like [what others have told me]. If I had realized this earlier, it would be different!” But, this is not unjustified! We are like that. The concern should be that, upon returning from unnecessary hardship, the self-reflection is not there, that is not good. This is the first point. Secondly, when you first begin [to apply Buddha's teaching], it requires undergoing certain

hardship. After a while, well, the smart ones learn not to totally count on self-reliance the next time. Self-reliance may not lead to understanding [of the instructions], many situations are by relying on excellent being, and then you will conserve a lot of energy in the end. In another words, he [the smart practitioner] is able to rely [on a qualified teacher].

[8B, 18.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 260 L14]

However, if they depend on the personal instructions of a guru, they will easily come to know the intended meaning.

Here, because it teaches [us] the instructions, it can quickly and precisely reveal to you: oh, where the essence of the scriptures and commentaries are!

[8B, 19.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 261 L3]

These instructions of the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* will readily bestow certain knowledge of the key points of the Buddha's word and treatises. I will explain at length how this is done in the appropriate sections below.

Here, it points out that the subsequent text illustrates this [easily finding the conqueror's intent]. Thus, as long as we follow the text step by step, with qualified essence, quantitative measurement, and systematic order, for each stage, the greatness is there, it is so great! If you are able to conform to it, no matter where you go, achievement will follow. For example, if we are applying Pure Land practice, wherever the aspired destination may be, you will be able to make it. This way, the attainable level is lower, then step up to the middle level, and move toward higher level.

Regardless of whether it is Zen meditation or tenet study, there is no exception; all rely on these orderly stages. Why is this? Because of the commonly shared foundation! The

explanation is very clear – it is the shared foundation for both Sutrayana and Tantrayana.

[8B, 19.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 261 L9]

Actually in this text, regarding Tantra teaching, nothing in this content is unshared [with the Tantra teaching]. But what is this content? What Mahayana must experience, Tantrayana has to experience too, and it is exactly the same. In fact, this is the purpose for us to study this text... As I have said before, for most of us now, the best and the only Dharma approach is chanting Buddha's name, this is a very truthful statement. However, we should absolutely refrain from the flaws mentioned earlier – chanting Buddha's name and forsaking all others. Based on this view, the best guidance to chant Buddha's name is here [to respect other Dharma approaches]. If you practice Zen meditation, well, it is the same. If you consider yourself to have sharp faculties and you claim to learn from Buddha, then you need to advance. The shared foundation [taking refuge to the three Jewels etc.] is still here; it will be [covered] later. Let us go over the last point:

[8B, 20.35; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 262 L2]

D. The greatness of enabling one to refrain automatically from great wrongdoing

It [the greatness of the teaching] not only has this kind of efficacy, moreover, it is often very difficult for us to purify contamination. Now, it will not be too difficult for you. It eliminates [wrongdoings] automatically. Prior to explaining the text, we all know “repentance;” this repentance will become effective after the signs of purification arise [v.1 p.253]. This is illustrated very clearly in the *Brahmajala Sutra*, also in the *Maha Samatha and Vipassana* by Master Zhi-zhe of the Tian-tai School, and even in the *Shorter Samatha and Vipassana*. This is discussed extensively in

many places. Also in *Cundi dharani*, it says for you to repent, what would you attain? [You will attain] the signs of purity – the dreams at night and if you practice meditation, the signs during the actual meditation session. Moreover, even you may have the external signs of arising virtue and internal signs of arising virtue; these will happen.

[8B, 21.30; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 262 L9]

Master Ou-yi is one of the great teachers of our [Chinese] lineage that we know of; he is a very extraordinary practitioner. As a result of researching Dharma thoroughly, he thought: it is absolutely not easy to obtain the true content of the teaching! This is referring to the precepts, being unable to attain the essence of the precepts. Thus, [he] abided by the *Sutra on the Divination of the Effect of Good and Evil Actions* and applied the prostration of the “Divination Repentance.” What age did he prostrate until? Until age forty-nine. Either age forty-nine or forty-seven? It had to be one of the two. He was ordained in his twenties and spent so many years, then what? The signs of purification and removal of contaminations [arose]. Wow! Thus, once the contaminations are there, for you to purify them is very hard, extremely difficult! If you are unable to purify them, then sorry, the cause and effect in Buddha Dharma cannot be fooled. There is no mercy at all. You just have to face the consequences!

[8B, 22.33; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 263 L2]

So now, well, you don't need too much effort, the purification will automatically disappear. This benefit is so incredibly huge! This is why it is explained everywhere in the sutras and commentaries – with reliance on a virtuous teacher, wow! The benefit is so huge, and the advantage is so great. [You] could even be like youthful Sudhana to obtain and achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime. This

concept has its special reason, has its special cause. Here, although we may say it is not necessary, I especially believe: learning Pure Land practice is required. But there are many biographies of Masters from various schools of thought that we need to refer to. Speaking of this, there is a commendable biography, *Life of Milarepa*. He did not confess and did nothing much else; [he] was just following his teacher and being tormented by his teacher to suffer tremendous hardships. In the end, not only were all his sins completely eliminated, but he also obtained such a great achievement. All these can be worthy as our reference. Now, let's take a look at how this text eliminates our wrongdoing:

[8B, 23.41; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 263 L10]

The *Lotus Sutra (Sad-dharma-puṇḍarika-sutra)* and the *Chapter of the Truth Speaker (Satyaka-parivarta)* explain that all of the Buddha's words directly or indirectly teach methods for becoming a buddha.

This is cited from the sutra, the sutra taught us this. This *Sad-dharma-puṇḍarika-sutra* is the *Lotus Sutra*. It states all of Buddha's teachings, regardless of whether they are ultimate-reality [guiding-to-emptiness] or expedient-means [plan-of-convenience]; in fact, Buddha always based [his teachings] on the various faculties of all living beings and gave various teachings, this is certain. So some are expedient-means, some are ultimate-reality. What is "ultimate-reality"? It is properly, completely revealing [the ultimate truth]. What is "expedient-means"? [It is] gradually guiding you. Just like a child, initially enrolling in kindergarten or first grade. The teaching, the content, may not enable you to invent or whatever, this is called "expedient-means," the interim step. Once you advance step by step, eventually you will make it. So this is a necessary process that will eventually lead to Buddhahood.

Actually, even with the example that was just mentioned, would you consider teaching college-level material to an elementary student? To the student, he is only at the elementary school level. Of course, Buddha is the teacher of the three realms [desire, form and formless realms]; he must know our root nature, so the method that he applies is absolutely accurate. Hence, can we disparage him? This is what we need to be aware of!

[8B, 25.02; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 264 L6]
There are those with misunderstanding

Some people don't understand this.

[8B, 25.06; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 264 L8]
who hold that some teachings are methods for becoming a Buddha and some teachings are obstacles to becoming a Buddha.

Because some people lack the true understanding of Buddha's intent, their erroneous attachment of one is for attaining Buddhahood; and the other one is wrong – this is an obstruction [to achieve Buddhahood].

[8B, 25.22; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 264 L11]

They then differentiate the words of the Buddha into good and bad, reasonable and unreasonable, and great and small vehicles.

So he [the practitioner] distinguishes this as good, this as bad; this is reasonable, this is unreasonable; this is Mahayana, this is Hinayana. Up to now, he will have this question, "Well, it seems like the teaching shows us to ignore either Mahayana or Hinayana teachings." It seems that way! It does not mean this. The reason ancient Masters divided Buddha's teachings into Mahayana and Hinayana is – within [Chinese] Mahayana, it is even further divided

into the general school, the specific school, the teaching of sudden enlightenment, and the complete tenets (通教、別教、頓教、圓教), why? To show you the appropriate order of the stages. Once you recognize and understand the appropriate order of the stages, you won't be biased. [You] won't say I am right, he is wrong. You then realize: well, Buddha has his step-by-step guidance to help people to advance. Since you want to learn from Buddha, you have to study them [the various schools] sooner or later. Now, I start from the Mahayana aspiration, when engaging in deeds, sure, there is no need to study extensively. But when you achieve it yourself and are ready to help others, you still need to study extensively. Isn't this very clear? How can we abandon it? So this is how ancient Masters divided it. Now, the text says: we do not understand, so we are holding on to false views and say, "Well, this Mahayana is good, this Hinayana is not good" and vice versa. This is very terrible, very awful! In these circumstances, saying the Maha is...

[8B, 26.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 265 L10]

Finally, they hold that some teachings are to be cast aside, saying, "A bodhisattva should train in this and should not train in that." Thus, they abandon the teachings.

A Bodhisattva, well, should learn this. Oh, this other one is not right! That is abandoning it.

[8B, 26.56; Original Commentary Script Vol 1, P 265 L12]

The Sutra Gathering All the Threads (Sarva-vaidalya-saṃgraha-sutra) says:

Manjusri, the karmic obstruction of abandoning the excellent teaching is subtle. Manjusri, whoever

distinguishes some of the words spoken by the Tathagata as good and some as bad abandons the teaching.

This is very easy. In this sutra, Buddha told Manjusri, regarding abandoning the teaching, it is very subtle. Now, we have a coarse mind and it is not easy to identify this. If someone says, “This one is good, this one is inferior.” When you have this perception, sorry, this is abandoning the teaching!

English LR v.1 p.53

**[9A, 00.13; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 3 L1]
One who abandons the teaching, by having abandoned it, deprecates the Tathagata and speaks badly of the community.**

The Dharma has been accumulated by the Tathagata for countless eons, and if [we] claim it is incorrect - isn't this abandoning the teaching? Moreover, the lineage of this teaching relies on the Sangha community, and if [we] consider it to be wrong - wouldn't this be deprecating the Sangha community? As for other wrongdoings, [such as] our infraction of the five deeds of immediate retribution [v.1 p.389 #195], they can be salvaged, whereas there is nothing that can save us with the wrongdoing of abandoning the teaching, this is the reason. Thus, we must make sure to never commit this misdeed!

**[9A, 00.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 3 L5]
If you say, “This is reasonable; this is unreasonable,” you abandon the teaching.**

This is reasonable; this is unreasonable – such is considered as abandoning the teaching.

English LR v.1 p.54

[9A, 00.45; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 3 L7]

If you say, “This was set forth for the sake of bodhisattvas; this was set forth for the sake of *sravakas*,” you abandon the teaching. If you say, “This was set forth for the sake of *pratyekabuddhas*,” you abandon the teaching. If you say, “This is not a training of bodhisattvas,” you abandon the teaching. The fault of having abandoned the teaching is very grave.

This is same as the previous reasoning. That is to say, if we properly distinguish it, [we] also need to know: Oh, the learning over here is shared with *sravakas*, that one is shared with *pratyekabuddha*. Some people favor this and are classified as *sravakas*; others prefer that, so they are called *pratyekabuddha*. This is what we must distinguish clearly, knowing [how] to advance [on the path] and not rely on our grasping – mine is right, yours is not. Once you have this mentality, [you have] wronged, [the mental activity] is very subtle, very subtle. If we don’t handle it properly and refuse to study [the teaching], then it is wrong again. This [flaw] is weighty. Next is the quote from a Sutra.

**[9A, 01.40; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 4 L8]
The King of Concentrations Sutra (Samādhi-rāja-sutra)
says:**

The wrongdoing of one who abandons the collections of sutras is far greater than that of one who causes the destruction of all of the *stupas* here in Jambudvīpa.

If you destroy all stupas and temples in Jambudvīpa, this wrongdoing is not as weighty [as abandoning the teachings]. Your infraction of abandoning the teaching is far greater than destroying the stupas. Next:

**[9A, 01.59; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 4 L11]
*The wrongdoing of one who abandons the collections of sutras is far greater than that of one who kills arhats equal in number to the sands of the Ganges.***

If you kill arhats equal in number to the sands of the Ganges, killing one arhat is already serious – [the infraction of] the five deeds of immediate retribution – now you killed arhats equal in number to the sands of the Ganges, this retribution is disastrous! The author will tell us later that if you abandon the teaching, this transgression is even greater! This is from the sutra - the *King of Concentrations Sutra* - this is not our random chatter! The author, quoted from Sutras throughout, this [we] should pay attention to!

[9A, 02.28; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 5 L1]
In general, there are many ways that abandoning the teaching can occur. However, the way indicated above is the worst, so take pains to eliminate it.

There is more to truly abandoning the teaching. There are other aspects, but this point is especially important, the retribution is especially great. Therefore, [we] must strive hard to eliminate it.

[9A, 02.44; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 5 L4]
Moreover, since you overcome abandonment by merely gaining certain knowledge of the first two greatnesses as indicated above, you automatically are kept from wrongdoing.

If you have definite understanding of the first three points [in chapter 2], naturally you will not transgress, right? Thus [the 4th point is]: “you automatically are kept from wrongdoing.” So, our terrible wrongdoings will naturally disappear. This treatise has such great benefit: on the one hand, it teaches and guides us to a direct path; on the hand, many wrongdoings will naturally be avoided.

[9A, 03.16; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 5 L9]
Seek such knowledge through extensive reading of the *Chapter of the Truth Speaker and the Lotus Sutra*.

Concerning this, you can refer to the aforementioned two Sutras [*Chapter of the Truth Speaker and Lotus Sutra*] more often.

[9A, 03.26; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 5 L11]
In the *Sutra Gathering All the Threads* you will find other ways of abandoning the teaching.

As for the other portion [regarding abandonment and deprecation], you can refer to the *Sutra Gathering All the Threads*. Now, we may as well review the *Lotus Sutra*, familiar to many as the *Lotus Sutra of Wonderful Dharma*. In the beginning of [chapter 2] *Skillfulness*, it explains very clearly, is very clearly expounded! What was the purpose of Buddha coming to this world? It was to teach you everything he accumulated from beginningless time - the most complete Dharma. However, due to various propensities of living beings, Buddha applied all kinds of approaches for you. Yet, for all of his approaches, as long as you touched a speck of it, [you] are also doing it right! Thus, admittedly, your experiential knowledge of great sutras, commentaries and so forth work this way – the same applies to any small matter. Therefore, Buddha stated everywhere, that even for a children's game - a child who crouches down to make a Buddha figure with sand - he will eventually become Buddha. Later, if you go to [a temple] and engage in anything – pick up a Dharma instrument and praise the Buddha once, one hail of Buddha's name and prostrate once - all these will even achieve Buddhahood. Yet now, we perceive these sutras and treatises are incorrect, how could this achievement be possible? For this reason we are told to study more. However, to really read more, it definitely requires virtuous and skillful guidance so you can understand easily. Otherwise, you strive hard for a given time; it may more or less work.

[9A, 05.01; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 6 L9]

I believe, for you folks, your virtuous roots could be far better than mine, so I greatly admire [you]. Why do I say this? It seems like I am explaining that the *Lotus Sutra of Wonderful Dharma* to you, lecturing with sound reasoning; when actually my understanding is just very shallow. About twenty some years ago, when I was first ordained, people said that this [*Lotus Sutra*] is the most complete Mahayana scripture. I went to read it with great admiration, but, after a while, there was not a single bit of appeal [to me]. Why was it not appealing? For the Sutra said – you can achieve Buddhahood; he too can be a Buddha. Alas, but it did not explain the method to achieve Buddhahood, and I thought it seemed too easy! I was not able to understand it at that time, but, later, after lengthy reflection I came to understand it. What was the essential point? The *Lotus Sutra* explains the true and ultimate purpose of Buddha coming to our world.

[9A, 05.53; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 7 L1]

Then why not achieve [Buddhahood] in one try? That is because the root nature of living beings is not there yet. Even though Buddha guided them life after life, advised [them] to do it this way, to do it like this, but everyone still grasped tightly to their personal preference. As a result, they ended up with the same old path. Due to this, [Buddha] just had to match to our tendency and coax you with: well, well, this is good, that is good too! However, in spite of this, you will eventually reach the destination. So [Buddha] complied with our tendency in this manner or, to use the worldly term, coaxes you - this is called expedient-means. Therefore, all of these [convenience approaches] are nothing but Buddha's efforts in three countless eons, actually it is immeasurable eons, accumulated with painstaking endeavor. During the process of accumulation, Buddha sacrificed his physical body and eyes, arms and legs, and

brain, and even gave up the external – his spouse and country. The teachings were accumulated in this way!

[9A, 06.51; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 7 L8]

So the following has a special meaning. You may say, why does it say such a long period of time as in “three countless eons”? It is covered in the *Lotus Sutra*. Isn't there a story at the end of the *Chapter of Arising from the Earth* [Chapter 15] of the *Lotus Sutra*? The actual duration for Buddha to achieve Buddhahood is an inconceivable number of eons. After his achievement, he liberates living beings life after life. In other words, he accumulated Dharma treasures with this sacrifice, isn't [the length of duration] very obvious? So this is what we need to see.

[9A, 07.18; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 7 L12]

Then, from another point, we should look into this *Lotus Sutra*. To us, the *Lotus Sutra* often seems to talk about taking a detour – in fact, it is not! The *Lotus Sutra* has compared both the direct and detour paths. That is, if you can listen to the virtuous teacher from the very beginning, forsake self-grasping, and abide by his guided path, that will be the fast track, that is a speedy route! Before covering this fast track, we might as well review our actual situation at the present time. We may think: Right! Then why not do this [take the fast track]? Those people and arhats, circling around, eventually advanced on this fast path! It is usually hard for us to think of such a concept. Merely reading the printed text is very easy, but, realistically, we have to mindfully experience [advancing on the direct path].

[9A, 08.08; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 8 L4]

For such minor issues that we are facing now, can you forsake your own views for that of others? Is it possible? Even if you have barely done so, the inner grumbling is still

around for half a day and, feeling deflated, “I have to figure out a way [for others] to follow my views, for my opinion is the right one.” Is it like this? Think about it carefully. There is not a single bit of joking around in what I just said, or criticism of anyone, never. If [I am] blaming you, that is my fault! If you heard it as this way, then you are wrong! I just want for us to realize that it is so difficult for us to let go of this grasping! No matter how great the feeling is while listening to this concept – with great interest – after listening, you still have the same grasping. Even having listened with great feeling, I want to apply accordingly. By the time you rush to a place like the kitchen, upon eating, alas! His cooking does not satisfy my taste, better think of a way to add more salt. You will grumble and grumble at that time. If it does not work out: let me do the cooking, I will do it! Is it right? You must experience it from the actual attitude. Thus, this is such a trivial worldly case, to say nothing of attaining Buddhahood now! That is how it works. So the actual difference and crucial point is here.

[9A, 09.21; Original Commentary Script Vol 2, P 8 L14]

However, in such a situation, Buddha has a skillful approach. In general, with this understanding, we usually will consider: Sigh! To take the direct path, changing the latent propensities is so slow; in this case, well, well, this latent propensity of mine is weighty, eventually [I] will get there, I might as well take it slowly! This kind of mentality is formed very easily. Thus, for an authentic good teaching like this treatise, it does not tell you in the beginning to do it this, this, and this way! It is not with such high standards. When it begins, prior to imparting all of the teachings, it tells you to abide by a certain approach to advance and what the specific benefits will be, by saying: Well, to take it this way, the benefit is huge! Not only that, on the contrary, it tells you that if you do not take the path this way, what the serious

consequences will be. Further, in every aspect, it will disclose the benefits and disadvantages to make you understand. So, before you engage in it, contemplate: Oh, it is absolutely right! Besides, all these advantages and disadvantages are acquired through your present experience. Upon genuinely appreciating the experience, your inner voice will say: “Right, right, right! Why do I want to take it easy? Just for the sake of making it a little easier and attaining little more benefit. In this case, it seems that, taking this route of mine, not only is not any easier, but also leads to suffering a lot of hardship. Taking the teacher’s path, although there is suffering at the present moment, it saves major effort and will obtain great benefit.” With your ability to recognize the differences, then it will be easier to engage in it. This is to teach us the systematic order of the stages, as well as many key points, the specific benefits and laudable aspects.

CHAPTER 2 OUTLINE: THE GREATNESS OF THE TEACHING

II. Showing the greatness of the teaching in order to engender respect for the instructions

p.46

The root text of LR is 'Lamp for the path to enlightenment', which is Comprehensive and fundamental: P45

1. Its subject matter is comprehensive/**corporate condition (quality)** - It teaches by drawing together the key points of both the sutra and mantra vehicles.
2. It is easy to put into practice/fundamental **substantial condition (quantity)** - It emphasizes the stages of disciplining the mind.
3. Systematic order - **unmistaken sequential steps** - It is adorned with the instructions of two gurus who were skilled in the systems of the two great trailblazers.

A. The greatness of enabling one to know that all of the teachings are free of contradiction.

1. What is "Teachings": the teachings are what the Conqueror explained well. P46L19
2. Why all the teachings are free from contradiction: All teachings are the path by which one person becomes a buddha. P46L22
3. Elaborates reasons for those non-believers: Bodhisattvas make it their goal to accomplish the good of the world. They must train in the paths of those three lineages. P46L25
4. There are shared (Theravada) and unshared paths to enter the Mahayana. P47L16
A perfect buddha has extinguished all types of faults and accomplished all types of good qualities. P47L26
5. a. Qualm: Should one enter into the Vajrayana need to practice the perfection vehicle? P47L36
b. Answer: The substance of the path of the perfection vehicle is part of the path of the Vajrayana. P48 L1
On frequent occasions of entering mandalas of highest yoga tantra, you must take both the shared (Bodhisattva vows) and unshared tantric vows. P48L12
6. a. Apart from certain points about what is or is not to be done, the scriptures are very much in agreement. P48L29
b. If you do not gain such an understanding, you will abandon other teachings. P49L10
7. How to practice? Having relied upon an excellent protector, solidify your certainty about the way that all the scriptures are causal factors for one person to become a buddha. Then practice those things that you can practice now. P49 L21.
8. Because these instructions in the "Lamp for the path to enlightenment" guide students by gathering all the key points of the sutra and mantra vehicles into the path for one person to become a buddha, they have the greatness of producing the certainty that all of the teachings are free of contradiction. P49L37

B. The greatness of enabling one to understand that all of the scriptures are instructions for practice. p.50

1. In general, only the scriptures of the Conqueror provide the means to achieve all temporary and ultimate benefit and happiness for those who desire liberation. For only the Buddha is free from all error in teaching what is to be adopted and what is to be cast aside. P50 L3
2. We need commentaries and personal instructions: Nevertheless, students in this later time will not discover the intent of those words by delving into them on their own without depending on valid commentaries and personal instructions of excellent beings. P50L17
- 3 Differences between a pure personal instruction and non-pure one: For something to be a pure personal instruction...bestow certain knowledge of the meaning of the Buddha's words

and the great commentaries on their intent, or if it teaches a path incompatible with these. P50L23

4. Wrong View: There are those who conclude that any classic text should be considered only an explanatory teaching, therefore lacking the key points for practice. P50L29
 - a. The texts are without substance, since they merely promote a superficial knowledge and eliminate others' misconceptions; yet the personal instructions, since they reveal the deep meaning, are supreme. P51L3
 5. We need to understand all of the scriptures as instructions for practice. P51L16
 - a. Also, the great Elder's student...body, speech, and mind during one session of meditation on Atisha's instructions. P51L18
 - b. The excellent teachings of the Buddha is twofold: scripture & realization P51L32
 6. Thus, these instructions include, in complete form...and you analyze with discerning wisdom that which requires analytical meditation. By doing this, you will understand that all of the scriptures are instructions for practice. P52L14
 7. Otherwise, you will spend your entire life without discerning wisdom, practicing just some incomplete portion of the path and not the complete corpus. P52L22
- Therefore, when it becomes clear to you that the profound and vast scriptural collections...you will then completely overcome the misconceptions...for practice.

C. The greatness of enabling one easily to find the Conqueror's intent. p.53

1. Even if beginners- without extensive training – delve into them, they will not discover their intended meaning without depending on the personal instructions of an excellent being. P53L6
2. However, if they depend on the personal instructions of a guru, they will easily come to know the intended meanings. P53L10
3. These instructions of the 'Lamp for the path to enlightenment' will readily bestow certain knowledge of the key points of the Buddha's word and the treatises, P53L13

D. The greatness of enabling one to refrain automatically from great wrongdoing

1. The fault of having abandoned the teaching is very grave. P54 L4.
2. You will overcome abandonment by merely gaining certain knowledge of the first two greatnesses as indicated above, you automatically are kept from wrongdoing.
3. Seek such knowledge through extensive reading of the "Chapter of the Truth Speaker" and the "Lotus Sutra".

Some key terms mentioned in this chapter:

p.46 Nonabiding Nirvana	3 types of acquired nirvana: Nirvana with a residue Nirvana without residue, also called pari-nirvana Nonabiding nirvana
p.46 p.47 & 48 See p.382 #59	3 lineage: Sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas 3 vehicles: Theravada/Hinayana (scholars have different opinions on these 2 terms), Sutrayana/Perfection vehicle, Tantrayana(External Tantras, Secret Tantras)
p.48 See p.381 #58	3 forms of ethical discipline: The superior vows of individual liberation (monastic vows) The bodhisattva vows The vows of the Vajrayana
p.48 see p.381~2 #59	4 Tantras: 2 for External: Action & Performance 2 for Secret: Yoga & Highest yoga tantra

	3 lower Tantras: Action, Performance, and Yoga Tantras
p.48	5 paths: path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation, path of no more learning
p.50	Sages' wisdom level: Omniscience = Buddhahood Perfection of wisdom = knows fully the principles of causality = Bodhisattva Wisdom emptiness = Arhat Sentient Beings wisdom level: Study/hearing/listen Reflection/contemplating Meditation/practice
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p.51 & 52	3 karmic doors: Body/ physical Speech/verbal Mind/mental
p.52	2 meditations: Stabilizing meditation/serenity Analytical meditation/insight
p.49 & 52	2 collections: Profound view/wisdom Vast deeds/ love and compassion
p.51	2 types of teaching: Scriptural/intellectual knowledge Realization/experiential knowledge