

## **Transcript of the teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on *The 37 Aspects of the Path to Enlightenment***

**Chart on the Eight Categories and 70 Topics:** Extract from *Basic Program Study Manual for Maitreya's Ornament of Clear Realisations, Chapter 4*, compiled by Emily Hsu and Kok Wai Cheong, revised by Sally Ong and Ven. Sangye Khadro; an FPMT Masters Program Materials Project, edition February 2010, © FPMT, Inc.

### **Lesson 2**

**9 June 2016**

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Review. Explaining the verse from the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*: “A star, a visual aberration, a flame of a lamp.”

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#### **REVIEW**

In the last lesson, we talked about the verse from the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*.

A star, a visual aberration, a flame of a lamp,  
An illusion, a drop of dew, or a bubble,  
A dream, a flash of lightening, a cloud,  
See conditioned things as such!

The first line of this verse—“A star, a visual aberration, a flame of a lamp”—is an explanation of the basis of reality. This is condensed into the two truths.

At night when it is dark, we see many stars in the sky. The stars are analogous to the variety of appearances that can appear to a mind that is polluted by latencies of ignorance.

As for the mind that is polluted by latencies of ignorance, there are minds that are valid cognizers as well as minds that are not valid cognizers.

#### *Need for analysis and reflection*

Whenever you listen to an explanation of the Dharma as you doing now, it is very important that you reflect and analyze as you listen to what is being said. This is extremely important. If you only listen to what is being said without thinking at all, without reflecting or analyzing, then there is no way you are going to learn anything.

In the process of educating yourself, when you are learning the Dharma and hearing an explanation, you have to simultaneously analyze as you listen. Without such analysis, you will not be able to check whether you understand what is being taught or not. If you don't think about it, you will not be able to see whether you agree with what is being said or not.

While thinking as you listen to the teachings, if you find points that are objectionable to you or that you cannot agree with, then you need to bring them up and ask me. You pose a question, “Why did you say that? Is that correct? Is that wrong?”

When you are dealing with Buddhist philosophy and looking at the great treatises, in order to understand what is in the text, you have to reflect and analyze it in order to understand its meaning. Otherwise, there is no way to understand these topics at all. When you engage in studying these topics, you have to try your best. Your mind has to be very alert in seeking out the answer through analysis and reflection.

There is a variety of ways that objects can appear to a conventional awareness. Things that exist appear to a conventional awareness. However, things that do not actually exist can also appear in the perspective of a conventional awareness. If this is so, how then do we decide whether something exists or not, since anything can appear to a conventional awareness? How do we tell that an appearance represents something that actually exists whereas another appearance may just be a false appearance in that it doesn't exist and represent reality at all? This is something that we really need to spend time analyzing and thinking about.

From the viewpoint of the highest philosophical school (the Consequence Middle Way School), it is stated decisively that everything that exists exists in mere name and is merely designated by thought. At the same time, the proponents of this highest viewpoint also state very clearly that it doesn't mean that something that is a fabrication or creation of the mind necessarily exists.

You should be able at least to grasp what I'm trying to say. You should be able to think about this because you are not children. All of you have studied and have passed through the education system. My point is that you have to try your best to understand what I'm trying to say here.

Of course, this doesn't mean that you can grasp everything all the time. Whenever you learn something, there will always be new concepts and even new words that you cannot handle as you are not familiar with them. But that doesn't mean that you don't try. You have to try and understand whatever you can manage. The point is that you really have to think about this. You can't just sit there and not think at all!

The highest philosophical school states that everything that exists *necessarily* exists in mere name or exists as merely designated by thought. No phenomenon ever exists in and of itself. There is no true existence or inherent existence. At the same time, they also assert that this does *not* mean that whatever is labelled or created by the mind necessarily exists. For example, our body does not exist from its own side. Nevertheless, it *appears* to be inherently existent to the mind to which it appears. Another example is the eye consciousness apprehending a mirage to be a body of water. We believe that the body of water exists. These are examples of how things can appear to the mind but do not actually exist in reality.

In the teachings, an easy example is used such as believing that there is a body of water out there whereas such a body of water does not exist. It is just an illusion, a mirage.

The point behind such examples is that they lead us to an understanding of the things that matter. For instance, if you understand the example of the mirage, you can use that understanding to look at your own body to see how the body does not exist in the way it appears. Think of how your body appears to you when you think about it. Although your body appears to be truly existent, it is not truly existent. Our body has never appeared to us to be merely imputed by thought. The body does not present itself to the mind to be existing in mere name, merely labelled by the mind. Instead, how does our body appear to our mind? Instinctively, it appears to exist in and of itself, right there from its own side. Yes, this is how our body appears but at the end of the day, our analysis leads us to the conclusion that although the body *appears* to exist truly, in reality, the body has *never* existed truly. Our analysis should lead to that conclusion.

### *“Form is empty”*

We recite from the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* that “Form is empty.” It is saying that, for example, the form aggregate that we have is empty. What is it empty of? It is empty of existing in and of itself. It is empty of true existence. It is empty of inherent existence. What is “Form is empty” trying to establish? It is trying to establish the meaning of the ultimate truth, the ultimate nature of reality.

Understanding this is so important and indispensable. When we say, “Form is empty,” what are we saying? The conclusion is that phenomena such as form, our body and so forth do not exist in and of themselves. They do not exist truly. They do not exist from their own side even though they *appear* to exist from their own side. They *appear* to exist truly. They *appear* to exist in and of themselves. In reality, they do *not* exist in and of themselves. As such, phenomena like form are empty of existing in and of themselves, and are empty of existing inherently. The emptiness of form is the final mode of abiding of form, i.e., the emptiness of form is the ultimate nature of form.

“Form is empty” establishes the ultimate nature of form in that form has never and will never exist inherently. Form, like our body, does not exist in and of itself. As such, form is empty of existing in and of itself. It is devoid of existing inherently.

After having established the ultimate nature of form, perhaps some people may make the mistake of thinking that if form does not exist inherently, then form does not exist at all, i.e., there is no form at all. This is wrong because form does exist.

### *“Emptiness is form”*

As such, the sutra states, “Emptiness is form.” The meaning of this is similar to “a flame of a lamp” in the first line of the verse from the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*. Although a flame of a lamp has never existed in and of itself and has never existed truly, nevertheless, the flame of a lamp dependently arises through the coming together of causes and conditions such as the butter, the wick and so forth. Only then can a flame of a butter lamp come into existence. It does not exist in and of itself. How does it exist? A flame of a lamp exists in mere name. It is a mere appearance. This is how it exists.

The explanation of “a flame of a lamp” is basically the same as the meaning of the line, “Emptiness is form.” Although form is devoid or empty of existing inherently, it doesn’t mean that form does not exist. It is true that when we look for the imputed object, form,

we will not find anything concrete that we can point to as form. What we will find is the emptiness of form but finding the emptiness of form does not mean that form does not exist. How then does form exist? Form exists within emptiness as something that is merely designated by thought and exists in mere name. This is how form exists.

*“A star, a visual aberration, a flame of a lamp”*

The first line in the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*, “A star, a visual aberration, a flame of a lamp,” is an introduction to what constitutes reality. The whole of reality, anything and everything that exists, can be included in the two truths. So this is the introduction to the basis.

It is stated in the teachings that if we do not understand the basis, i.e., what constitutes reality especially in terms of the presentation of the two truths, we will not discover and understand well the intent of the Buddha and his teachings. In order to understand well the intent of the Buddha and the intent of his teachings, we need a good grasp of the two truths. When we have a good grasp of the two truths, we will be able to complete the accumulation of the two collections. With that, we will achieve enlightenment. These are the benefits of having a good grasp of the two truths.

This is how it is presented in the teachings in terms of the basis, the path and the result.

- The basis is the two truths.
- The path is the method and wisdom.
- The result is the two bodies, the truth body and the form body.

It is so important to have some idea of the two truths. This is why I’m repeating this over and over again, saying the same thing in different ways. The two truths are the bedrock or foundation for everything else. The purpose of repeating myself over and over again is to emphasize their importance. You should also think about them over and over again.

If somebody were to ask you what the two truths are, at least you should be able to say decisively, “The two truths mean this; these are their names and this is what they are.” At the very minimum, you must be able to say this. It doesn’t matter who is asking this question about reality or the two truths or how they phrase their question. You should be able to deliver a definitive answer. That means you don’t have one answer for one person and another answer for another person. Your answer should be a standard answer, which is reflective of reality.

There are many people who are easily swayed. This means that if somebody says, “It is like that,” these people would agree readily, “Yes! Yes! It is like that.” When another person says something completely different, they will also say, “Yes! Yes! You are right. It is like that.” Their understanding is not stable at all!

What I’m trying to say is that whatever understanding we gain from our studies, the conclusion we arrive at must be firm and unshakeable. We must be convinced of the conclusion we arrive at. This is one point I want to drive home. I’m not saying that we should aim to be foolishly stubborn. Being decisive and holding on firmly to a position is not being foolishly stubborn, “This is so because my guru said so! Therefore, it has to be

so.” It should never be like that. Your decisiveness comes from having thought thoroughly about the subject matter. You understand what you are saying because you have thought about it and you know that your position is backed up by reason.

The result of learning and reflection should be this kind of decisive, unshakeable conclusion. This is especially important when we are dealing with Buddhist philosophy. The end result we are aiming for must be like that. We cannot be wishy-washy with our command of the topic.

What I’m presenting here is not something new. You have already studied the tenets that cover the Great Exposition School (GES), the Sutra School (SS), the Mind Only School (MOS) and the Middle Way School (MWS). Each of them has its own assertions of what the two truths are. If you remember what you have studied, this should not be anything new to you.

You have to know the presentation of the two truths from the perspectives of these four Buddhist tenets. With an understanding of the presentation of the two truths by the lower schools, only then will you see how the presentation of the two truths according to the higher schools is special, unique and extraordinary.

Although we don’t like suffering, we experience suffering in many ways. There has to be an answer to that. We don’t like it yet it keeps on coming our way. We get angry and we have attachment for all kinds of things. We don’t like to be upset and we don’t like to be angry yet anger still arises. Why? There has to be an answer. We can talk about reality, “Reality is these two truths. It is this and that.” But we still have to answer the question, “Why do we get upset? Why does attachment arise?”

When you hear an explanation like this, this is the way to listen to a teaching: for example, I had just asked the question “Why do we get upset? Why does attachment arise?” At the same time, you should be analysing my question. You should not just sit there, thinking, “He is asking why we are angry.” You have to ask yourself the question, think about it and look for the answer. This is why there is an art to learning and studying the Dharma and an art to listening to the teachings. It is not just sitting there and registering the words you hear.

If you don’t think about what you have read or heard, it is impossible to develop any insights or understanding. Often people think, “You are saying this again. I have already heard this before many times. I already know this as you have said it numberless times already.” With this kind of attitude, not putting effort into analysing what you have studied or heard, you will not taste the Dharma. The Dharma will not go into you. And this is why you don’t change. This is the problem.

We should ask ourselves this. Many of us, if not all of us here, have heard numberless teachings over many years but nothing much has happened. Is that right? It is important then to ask ourselves, “Where does the problem lie? What happened?” This absence of change despite having heard so many teachings over so many years is not due to a shortage of teachings. It is not due to experiencing the poverty of Dharma teachings. It is also not the fault of the teachings themselves. If we analyze and think carefully, it is

evident that we have never ever seriously analyzed what we have heard and what we have read. The problem comes from that lack of reflection, just listening to teachings and reading but no reflection at all.

It is said in the teachings that when we look at our own or someone else's body, the body appears to be something solid right there, whether we call it an inherently existent or truly existent pleasant body. Furthermore, we assent to that appearance.

When we see somebody that we dislike, what is the basis for our unhappiness with that person? It is just the mere appearance of the body of that person that makes us feel uneasy. It is said in the teachings that our feeling of unhappiness is based on our belief that there is a bad and terrible person, existing right there from its own side. Whether this is true remains to be seen from our own experience. We have to think about this.

The big question pertains to our object of attachment, say, the body of another person. In the view of that attachment, that attractive body appears to that mind of attachment in a certain way. The big question is this: "Yes, this is how this body is appearing to me but is that representative of how that body actually exists?" We have to think about this deeply.

Likewise, with regard to the enemy or the person we dislike so much, in the view of that mind of aversion or anger, that enemy or bad person appears in a certain way. Is that appearance indicative of how that person actually exists? This is what we must investigate.

The correct conclusion from thinking about what I have just said should be the same as what the line, "Form is empty," is trying to convey. We say that things do not exist in and of themselves, although they may appear in that way, be it our object of aversion or object of attachment. Applying the line, "Form is empty," to our enemy or object of attachment, that person does not exist in the way that our anger or attachment believes it to exist. Just by understanding well that our enemy or friend does not exist in the way they appear and the way our mind believes them to exist, our emotion, be it anger or attachment, will be reduced substantially. There is no force behind that anger or attachment anymore. When we develop this understanding, it is said that not only are those emotions subdued but we can eradicate those emotions completely because there is no longer any basis for them to arise.

Sometimes, when adults play games with children, they clench their fists and pretend to be holding something in them. Then they tell the children, "I am holding something special in my hand. If you can guess what it is, then it is yours." The children become excited and fantasize about what the special object may be. They look forward to getting that object inside the fists. Actually, there is nothing there.

Likewise, we are like those children in that we imbue so many hopes and expectations into the object we are clinging to, be it the enemy or friend. This can only lead to either very strong aversion or very strong clinging. At the end of the day, however, we are clinging on to nothing. We are getting upset with nothing. We are just like the child who is so excited over that empty fist. When the fist opens up, there is nothing there.

This is very clear evidence that we have been suffering and we will continue to suffer over nothing. Due to our hallucinated view, while there is nothing there, we think that it is everything although reality is not like that. Reality exists in terms of the two truths. Not knowing that all phenomena are empty and exist only in mere name, we lead life based on our made-up reality. Our hallucinated mind is the bedrock of all our views. Based on that, we lead our lives believing whatever our hallucinations tell us to be true. While they are not true, we think they are true and correct. We accept whatever appears to our mind. “The person appears like this. The object appears like that. Then they have to be like that. What I think is correct. How they appear to me is correct. There is nothing more than that. There is no other possibility for reality.” This is how we lead our lives. Based on this hallucination, we create our suffering life.

This is why it is so important to gain an understanding of reality and what actually exists. Because we don’t know this at all, this is why we suffer so much and we continue to be in samsara. If we don’t understand the two truths, we will never see the icing on top of the cake, the most delicious part of the entire Buddhadharma.

What is the essence, the very heart, of the entire Buddhadharma? If we don’t understand the two truths, there is no way to see the intent of the Buddha. Without understanding the two truths, there is no way to see how the Buddhadharma is truly in a class of its own. We will not be able to see how special, extraordinary and different it is from other beliefs and traditions. Appreciating the wonderful and special qualities of the Buddhadharma can only come from understanding well the presentation of the two truths, the Buddha’s explanation of what reality is. This is a hallmark of Buddhism that truly sets Buddhism apart from all other traditions.

Arya Nagajurna said in his *Essay on the Spirit of Enlightenment* that when one comes to understand the emptiness of all phenomena—how things do not exist inherently—and at the same time, is able to explain how actions can give rise to their effects, i.e., when you have the realization that emptiness is complementary with the working of karma and its effects, that realization is beyond marvellous and exceedingly amazing.

Many people think that they have some understanding of emptiness. Yet, they are the very people who assert that since everything is empty, there is no karma because that is empty too. That is why there is no karma and no effects. This is no way to understand the heart of the Buddhadharma.

#### *“An illusion”*

Our discussion so far is tied in with the analogy of “an illusion” from the verse in the *Vajra Cutter Sutra*.

We circle in samsara because we live a life based on our hallucination assenting to the appearance of things existing inherently. This is where all the anger and attachment come in. This is describing what reality is in general, i.e., our reality and how we get stuck in samsara. What is the method to overcome or at least start reducing our suffering?

*“A drop of dew”*

One starts with the meditation on impermanence. By meditating on impermanence, we can at least reduce our suffering because we reduce the strength of our negative emotions such as our attachment. A drop of dew ceases to exist very quickly as it is so fragile. All that is needed is the sunrise. That’s it. The drop of dew dries up and then ceases to exist.

This is analogous to our life—how it is disintegrating so quickly—and how our body and the body of our object of attachment are also disintegrating and undergoing change. If we talk about impermanence at its gross or coarse level, this refers to change over a long period of time. In a hundred years, neither we nor our object of attachment will be around anymore. There will come a time when our life, our body, the life and the body of others will cease to exist. This is coarse (or obvious) impermanence.

Based on this obvious impermanence, in order for change to happen over a long period of time, we look at smaller units of time. Even within a month, change is happening. As we look at smaller and smaller units of time, it comes to a level when we think about subtle impermanence or momentary change. So from coarse impermanence, we then talk about subtle impermanence.

One of the lower philosophical schools, the Great Exposition School (GES) posits that production, abiding and cessation do not occur simultaneously but serially. This is not the reality. From the very moment an impermanent phenomenon exists, that moment of production is also its moment of disintegration. A composed or compounded phenomenon undergoes momentary change. What is the cause for a composed phenomenon to undergo momentary change? The cause is none other than its production. There is no separate cause for the disintegration of an impermanent phenomenon. If we analyze, think about this well and apply reasoning, we will also see that the cause for its disintegration is the very cause of its production. This is the conclusion of subtle impermanence.

It is different when we talk about coarse impermanence, i.e., things changing over a long period of time. But the very basis for coarse impermanence is subtle impermanence. We understand that things undergo change and that impermanent phenomena undergo momentary change. If we were to ask, “What causes an impermanent phenomenon to change momentarily?” we always think there is a different cause. But in the very first place, the cause for an impermanent phenomenon to undergo momentary change is exactly the cause that brought about the phenomenon itself—the cause of production is the very cause of its disintegration. As such, if we can understand that our object of attachment/aversion will not last forever and is, in fact, disintegrating in each and every single moment, this can really help to lessen whatever negative emotion we have towards the object.

If we look at how our attachment or anger works, one of the conditions that makes our attachment and anger arise, although it is not the root cause, is the belief that the object of attachment and anger would always remain the same and will never change. This is the grasping at permanence. We may think, “He will always like me and he will never change. He will always remain like this.” Or we think, “My enemy has always been like



this. There is no hope for any change to occur.” We need to think things through and see that reality is not like that. They will undergo momentary change. When we understand that not only will they change but they are changing from moment to moment, that really helps because it takes away one of the supports of our attachment and anger. By reflecting on impermanence, it takes away one of the conditions for those emotions to arise.

There is not a single one of us here who doesn't have attachment. There is not a single one of us here who doesn't have anger. When these emotions arise, we can check for ourselves whether what we have discussed so far is true or not. We have to think about this and see things for ourselves. We need to meditate on our experience. When we reflect on the momentary nature of our object of attachment or aversion, we must see whether our attachment or anger subsides. We have to see for ourselves that this works.

Think about our own body. We always think that our body will remain basically the same. This is what we think and this is what we expect. Yet so many people get so upset and worried when they put on weight. It causes them so much distress when fat accumulates around their waistlines. They get so upset.

*Khen Rinpoche: Those who go to the gym to build their muscles, when their muscles get a little flabby, they become so worried. It is the same thing. Men also have problems. Women also have problems. Everybody have problems.*

I am not saying that we shouldn't take care of our health or our body. This is not the point. But such care should be within reason. There are many people who make it the sole purpose of their life to look good and to have a healthy and strong body. It is the only thing that is worth striving for in their lives. They put in so much time, effort, energy and money and spend their whole life doing this. Their whole life is wasted in this way.

I am not saying we shouldn't keep fit. Yes, we need to keep fit. But there are people who are so worried about their health and physical appearance because they never accept that it is the nature of the body to change, whether they like it or not. This is the reality. Their pain and worries come from not seeing and not accepting this reality. If from the beginning, they can see that their bodies will age, they will sag and go out of shape, then when it actually happens, they will feel less pain or even no pain at all. Therefore, it is important to reflect on and to remember impermanence all the time.

Soon, we will start on the 37 aspects of the path to enlightenment. The 37 aspects are classified into different groups. The very first group is called the four close placements of mindfulness. The first one is the close placement of mindfulness on the body. This is an exercise and meditation on seeing the momentary nature of the body and how it is impermanent.

When we are sick, there is no use to hold on to the idea that it feels terrible. Part of the reason why we feel like that is because we look at the sickness as something unchanging. It will be there forever. But if we just accept it, we will not worry and suffer unnecessarily. We can reflect on how even the sickness itself is an impermanent

phenomenon in that it undergoes change. This will help the mind a lot.

Likewise, even when things are going well and we are happy, we also have to remember that that will not last forever. Even if we are talking about our own happiness, right from day one, we should be aware that it will not last and that it is changeable. If we have that kind of attitude and expectation from the onset, the day when that pleasure or happiness disappears, we will not be so shocked because we already expected that to happen.

The recollection of impermanence and the momentary nature of phenomena are very important. We need to remember that all the time. If we can always keep that at the back of our mind, then it doesn't matter what we may encounter or experience in life, there will be less upheaval. We will be able to keep an even keel and not be too affected by things. As such, this leads to more peace and happiness in the heart and less disturbance.

This is why the very first teaching that the Buddha gave was on impermanence, which is so important. It is so very helpful. Right from the very beginning, we are taught something that is readily accessible and that we can use to overcome the cause of our problems, i.e., mainly attachment. Just thinking about impermanence really helps to pacify our desire and attachment. What the four close placements of mindfulness actually refer to is recollection. Recall what mindfulness is from the calm abiding section in the *Lam-rim Chenmo*. That section mentions not losing the object of observation in developing calm abiding. Mindfulness is developing familiarity with and remembering a familiar object of observation.

Many of you attended the module on *Mind and Mental Factors*. The mental factor of mindfulness has its object. That object cannot be a new object since we can only be mindful of an object that we remember, am familiar with or at least have come into contact with before. This is why the object of mindfulness is posited to be a familiar object.

What is the function of mindfulness? Its function is to cause us not to forget the object of observation. If we forget the object, there is no way to remember it. Forgetting and remembering the object cannot happen at the same time.

If we can apply mindfulness and vigilance with regard to our recollection of impermanence, then whatever we do in life, we will actively recall that it is not going to last forever and that it will come to an end. While it is there, it undergoes momentary change all the time. If we can have that kind of remembrance, never forgetting the impermanent nature of our own bodies and those of our objects of attachment, it will make a significant impact on and difference in our lives.

#### *“A bubble”*

The analogy of the water bubble can be used to illustrate impermanence as well but here, the water bubble is used to illustrate how everything in samsara is in the nature of suffering. Reflecting on the suffering nature of samsara is also a way to reduce our grasping or attachment and desire.

But it is not sufficient just to reflect on impermanence. It is not sufficient just to reflect on suffering. It is not sufficient just to reflect on being empty<sup>1</sup>. In order to achieve liberation and especially, enlightenment, we need to reflect on the meaning of selflessness. These are the four characteristics of the first noble truths—impermanence, suffering, empty and selfless. In order to achieve liberation and enlightenment, we have to reflect on the meaning of selflessness in order to overcome the root of our afflictions such as attachment, anger and, in particular, ignorance from which all other afflictions arise. In order to illustrate that, there are the analogies of “a dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud.”

*“A dream, a flash of lightening, a cloud”*

The analogies of “a dream, a flash of lightning, a cloud” illustrate how we can come to an understanding that past, present and future phenomena respectively—phenomena of the three times—are all devoid of true or inherent existence.

It is one thing to be able to say that. It is another matter to really understand and to be able to explain the analogies. For example, how does the analogy of a dream help us to understand that all past phenomena are empty of existing truly? How does a flash of lightning serve to illustrate that present phenomena is empty of existing truly? How does the analogy of a cloud serve to illustrate that future phenomena is empty of existing truly? To understand this, we have to think and analyse more deeply.

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With regard to chart on the eight categories and 70 topics given out on Tuesday, those of you who really want to study and to know this topic will have to read it and, if possible, memorize it. There is no choice. Otherwise, there is no basis to even understand the explanation. But even if you do understand the explanation, you may not find it applicable now. You may not see the point. The point is that you are laying the foundation now if you wish to study more profound topics in the future. If you want to be successful in your studies, then you have to know this subject. You have to understand the explanation.

In order to understand the explanation, at the very least, you have to be familiar with the words even if presently you don't know what they are talking about. You have to know, for example, that under the first category, there are ten topics, the next category has eleven topics and so on. At the very least, you have to go through the words.

*Khen Rinpoche: So the first thing to do is to go through the words. Hopefully, I can explain a little bit. We can't go through everything. It is true that this is a very profound subject. Seriously, it is tough. But that shouldn't be a reason to be discouraged and to give up. Rather we must try harder.*

Interpreted by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme; transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng and Aki Yeo; edited by Cecilia Tsong.

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<sup>1</sup> Empty here refers to one of the attributes of true sufferings— being empty of a self that is a different entity from the aggregates. Such a self is empty of being permanent, unitary and independent.